

Common Waterbirds of the Klamath Basin

*A collaboration by people who
love the wild birds*



“We still do not know one thousandth of one percent of what nature has revealed to us.” – Albert Einstein



Common Waterbirds of the Klamath Basin

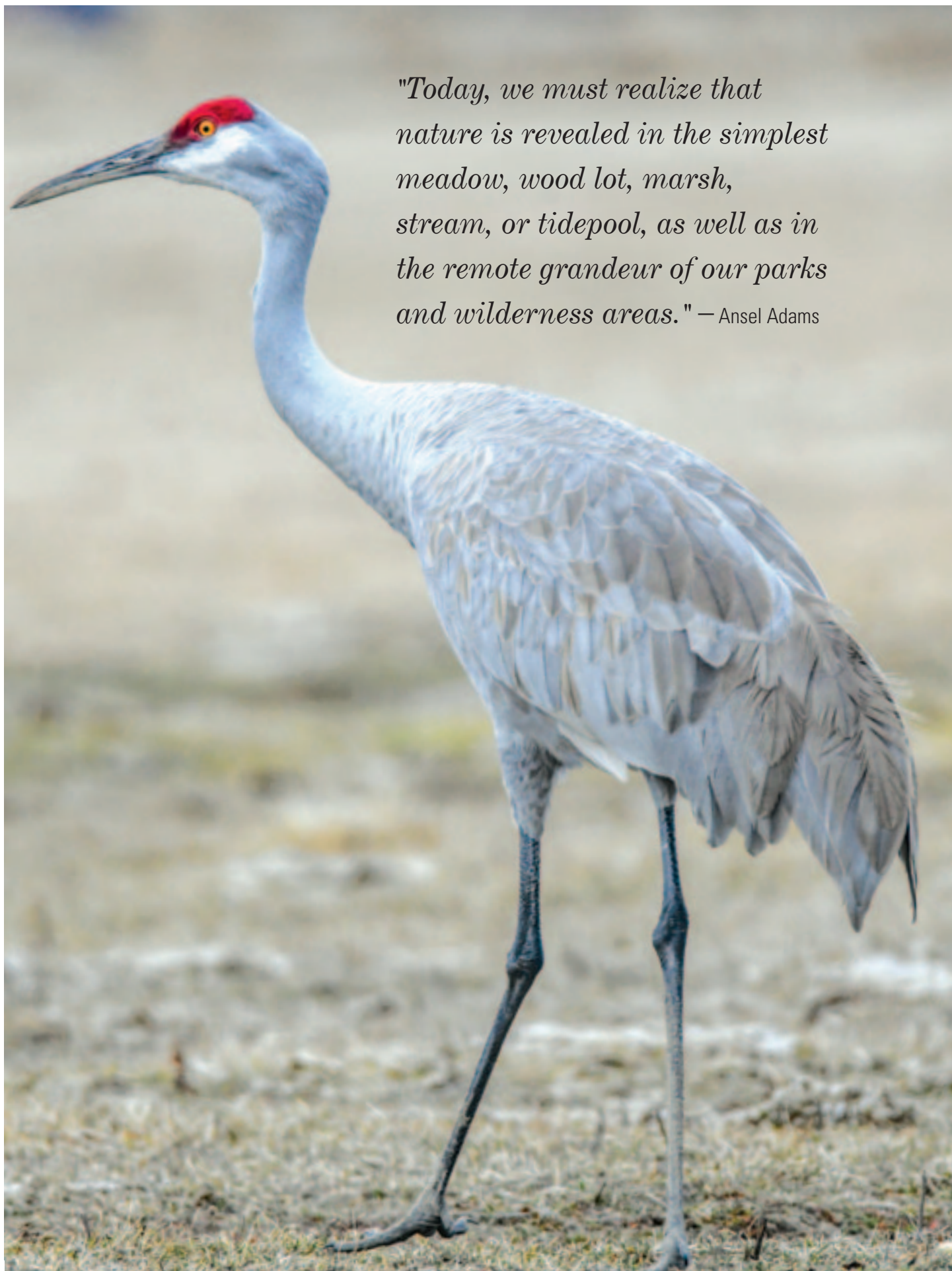
A collaboration by people who love the wild birds



Ruddy Duck ©Jack Noller

Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory
and photographers
Mary Williams Hyde, Loree Johnson and Jack Noller

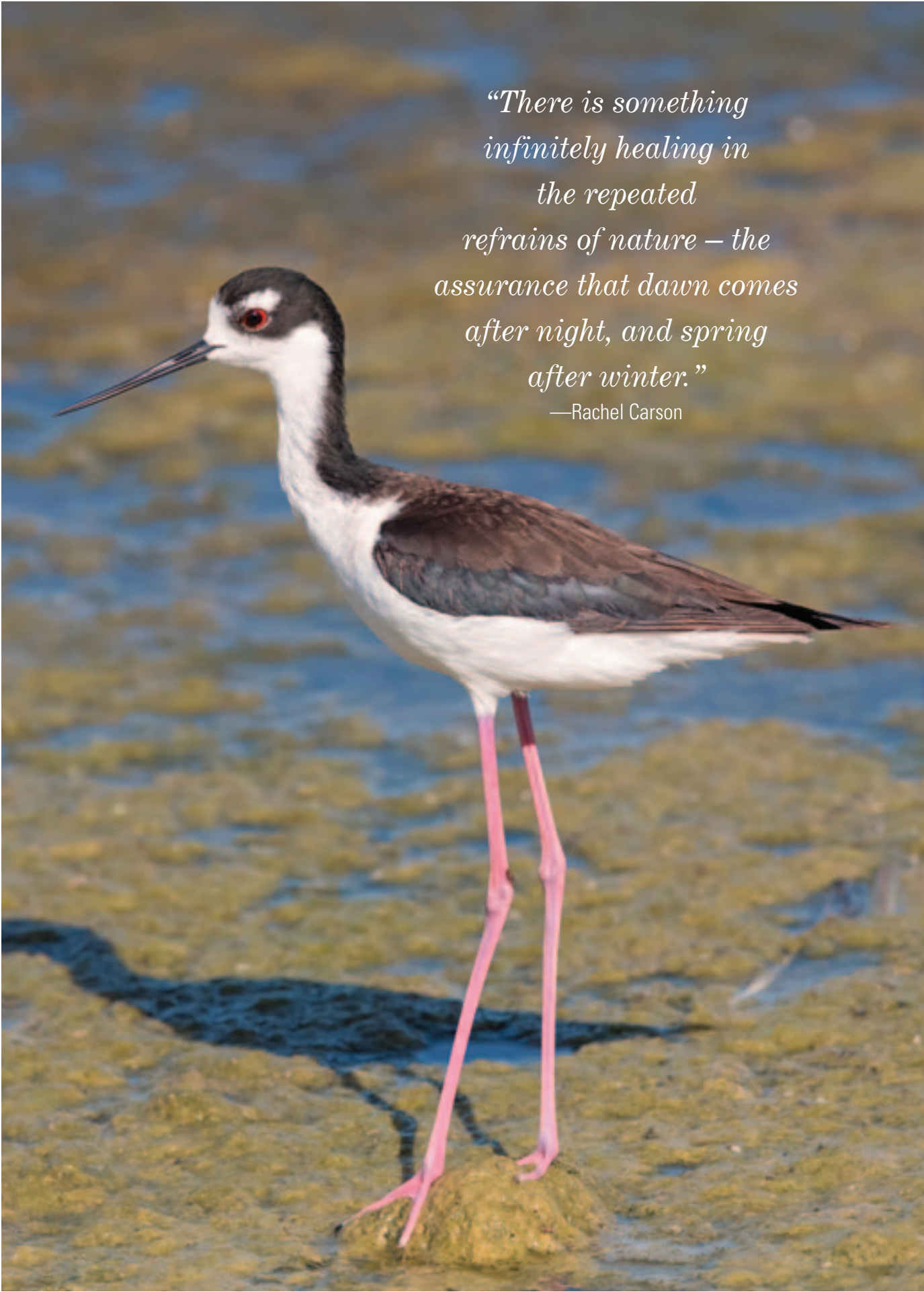
Cover photo of Clark's Grebe pair weed dancing by Loree Johnson



"Today, we must realize that nature is revealed in the simplest meadow, wood lot, marsh, stream, or tidepool, as well as in the remote grandeur of our parks and wilderness areas." — Ansel Adams

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	7	BELTED KINGFISHERS	
CORMORANTS		Belted Kingfisher	86-87
Double-crested Cormorant	8-9	MARSH BIRDS	
DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS		American Coot	90-91
American Wigeon	10-11	Sandhill Crane	92-93
Barrow's Goldeneye	12-13	Sora	94-95
Blue-winged Teal	14-15	Virginia Rail	96-97
Bufflehead	16-17	PELICANS	
Canada Goose	18-19	American White Pelican	100-101
Canvasback	20-21	SHOREBIRDS	
Cinnamon Teal	22-23	American Avocet	102-103
Common Goldeneye	24-25	Black-necked Stilt	104-105
Common Merganser	26-27	Dunlin	106-107
Gadwall	28-29	Greater Yellowlegs	108-109
Greater White-fronted Goose	30-31	Killdeer	110-111
Green-winged Teal	32-33	Long-billed Curlew	112-113
Hooded Merganser	34-35	Long-billed Dowitcher	114-115
Lesser Scaup	36-37	Spotted Sandpiper	116-117
Mallard Duck	38-39	Wilson's Phalarope	118-119
Northern Pintail	40-41	Wilson's Snipe	120-121
Northern Shoveler	42-43	WADING BIRDS	
Redhead Duck	44-45	American Bittern	124-125
Ring-necked Duck	46-47	Black-crowned Night Heron	126-127
Ross's Goose	48-49	Great Blue Heron	128-129
Ruddy Duck	50-51	Great Egret	130-131
Snow Goose	52-53	Green Heron	132-133
Trumpeter Swan	54-55	Snowy Egret	134-135
Tundra Swan	56-57	White-faced Ibis	136-137
Wood Duck	58-59	COLLABORATORS	140-143
GREBES			
Eared Grebe	62-63		
Pied-billed Grebe	64-65		
Clark's Grebe	66-67		
Western Grebe	68-69		
GULLS AND TERNS			
Bonaparte's Gull	72-73		
California Gull	74-75		
Caspian Tern	76-77		
Forster's Tern	78-79		
Franklin's Gull	80-81		
Ring-billed Gull	82-83		

A Black-necked Stilt is shown in profile, facing left. It has a long, thin, dark beak, a black cap with a white patch around its eye, and a black neck. Its body is white with dark brown wings and back. It has exceptionally long, thin, pinkish-red legs. The bird is standing on a small, mossy rock in a shallow, blue-green water body with a blurred background.

*“There is something
infinitely healing in
the repeated
refrains of nature – the
assurance that dawn comes
after night, and spring
after winter.”*

—Rachel Carson

INTRODUCTION

Almost all the waterbirds we feature in this book spend their lives wintering in the southern area of their migratory flyway. They head north to breed which means to mate and raise babies. This book offers you a brief glimpse into how beautiful they are and how challenging it is for them to survive.

We hope to inspire people and especially children to discover the magic and wonder of the birding world. All of us are connected: the landscape, the sky, the weather, the mammals, the birds and humans. The more we go outside and enjoy the riches of nature, the more we learn about ourselves.

Maybe when you look through this book you may want to be a wildlife biologist who studies and protects birds. Maybe you will be a photographer who falls in love with taking photos and sharing them with family and friends. Maybe you will become a teacher and inspire your students with nature projects and then they will become teachers.

We protect and care for what we love and the birds in this book are asking you to get to know them and then take care of them. Will you join us in learning about, enjoying and protecting these birds and the wild places they need to survive? See you outside. – Shannon Rio



“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.” – Rachel Carson

Double-crested Cormorant

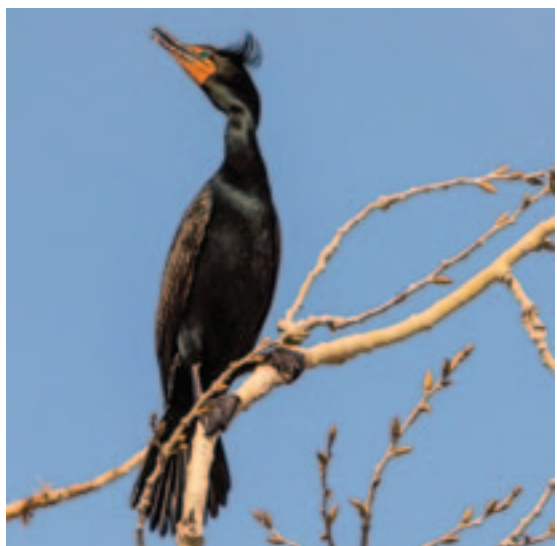
(*Nannopterum auritum*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 33 in.
Wingspan: 52 in.
Weight: 3.7 lb.

If you have doubts about the evolutionary connection between dinosaurs and birds, just look at the double-crested cormorant. With piercing turquoise eyes, a long slender neck, and a large yellow bill that ends in a sharp toothlike hook, these birds evoke a vision of how dinosaurs may have looked. Adults are jet black, while juvenile birds are mottled brown.



©Loree Johnson



©Jack Noller



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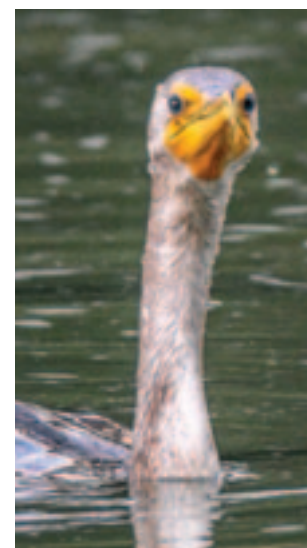
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Double-crested Cormorant

Diving deep in pursuit of fish, double-crested cormorants are sleek and swift. Their feathers contain less preening oil than other water birds, which means they must pause often to dry. While this may seem a disadvantage, their lack of buoyancy gives them superior speed and mobility under the water.

They have the largest range of all the cormorants, nesting in inland trees, while joining other cormorant species on cliffs in coastal regions. Using their own guano (poop!) as a glue to hold the material together, their nests are quite resilient. During breeding season, the inside of their mouth turns bright blue, which they show off to potential mates by opening their bill wide. Nests can be up to three feet in diameter and over a foot deep. Cormorant chicks are helpless and naked, requiring care from the parents for up to a month while gaining the strength to fledge.

— Loree Johnson



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©Loree Johnson

American Wigeon

(*Mareca americana*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 20 in.
Wingspan: 32 in.
Weight: 1.9 lbs.

Wigeons are a dabbling duck with a short pale bill. Breeding males have a stunning green stripe through the eye and a white cap. Thus they have the nickname of “baldpate.”



©Jack Noller



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American Wigeon

Note that the female will generally have a less colorful and quieter appearance. She is responsible for incubating the 3-13 eggs and assisting the fledglings. Wigeons nest on dry ground in fields and grasslands. They are born precocial meaning they have eyes open and will independently find food as soon as they emerge from the egg and become fledglings.



©Mary Williams Hyde

Wigeons can also be seen in shallow ponds tilting vertically so they can nibble on aquatic plants.

Robbing coots and other ducks comes easily to the wigeon as it will wait for them to emerge with vegetation and grab it. Yum!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Barrow's Goldeneye

(*Bucephala islandica*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 18 in.
Wingspan: 28 in.
Weight: 2.1 lbs.

The elegant male Barrow's Goldeneye is a striking black and white medium-sized duck with a head that has a purple glow when the sunlight shines upon it. He has a crescent shaped white patch between the eye and the beak. The female is a subtle beauty with a grayish body, a copper-colored head and a mostly yellow-orange bill. And, of course, they both have golden-colored eyes!



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Barrow's Goldeneye

Breeding occurs at high elevations in Canada and Alaska. They nest in tree cavities often made by a woodpecker. They will also nest in rock crevices and haylofts and in human-made nest boxes. When the babies emerge from the egg, they jump from the box 24-36 hours later. They are covered with down and feed themselves but mama goldeneye keeps a sharp lookout for predators.

These are active, strong-winged fliers moving singly or in small flocks. A distinctive wing-whistling sound they make in flight has earned them the name of “whistlers”.

Ducks are classified as either dabblers or divers. These ducks are super divers going up to 15 feet deep to catch their food which can be fish eggs, aquatic insects or plant matter.

The challenges to this duck are many including oil spills on their wintering grounds, being overhunted and loss of nest cavities due to extensive logging. Help them out by putting up a nesting box. Every bird we help ends up helping us as well. Worth thinking about.

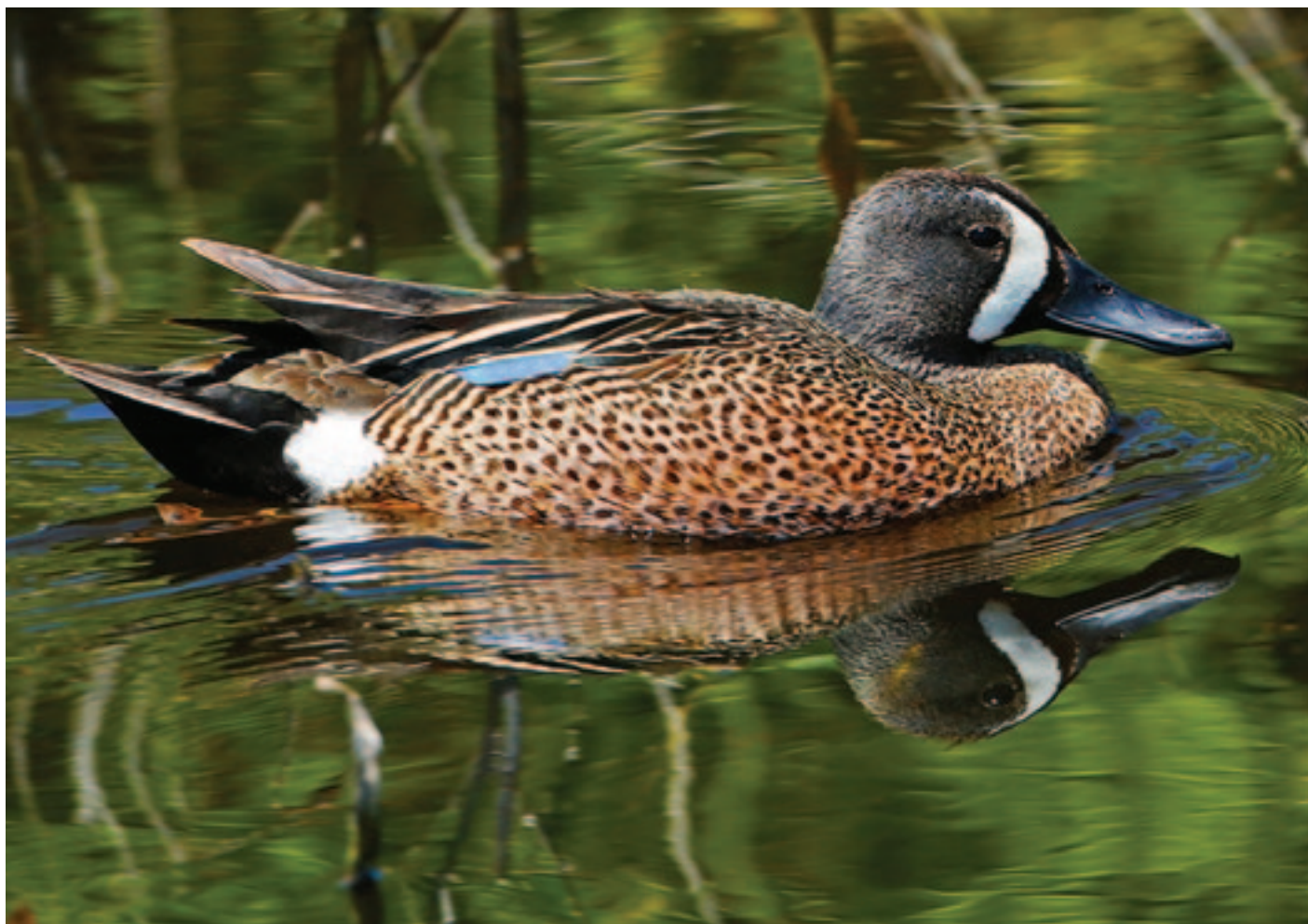
—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Blue-winged Teal

(*Spatula discors*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 15 in.
Wingspan: 23 in.
Weight: 13 oz.

The white crescent-shaped moon at the base of the bill of the male is a dead giveaway: this is a blue-winged teal. Stunning! The body is buffy colored with dense black specks. This duck eats plants and seeds and aquatic insects by dabbling so you may only see the bottom half of this duck as it tips up to feed. In flight, this duck has a beautiful patch of powder-blue on their wings. That is how they got their name.

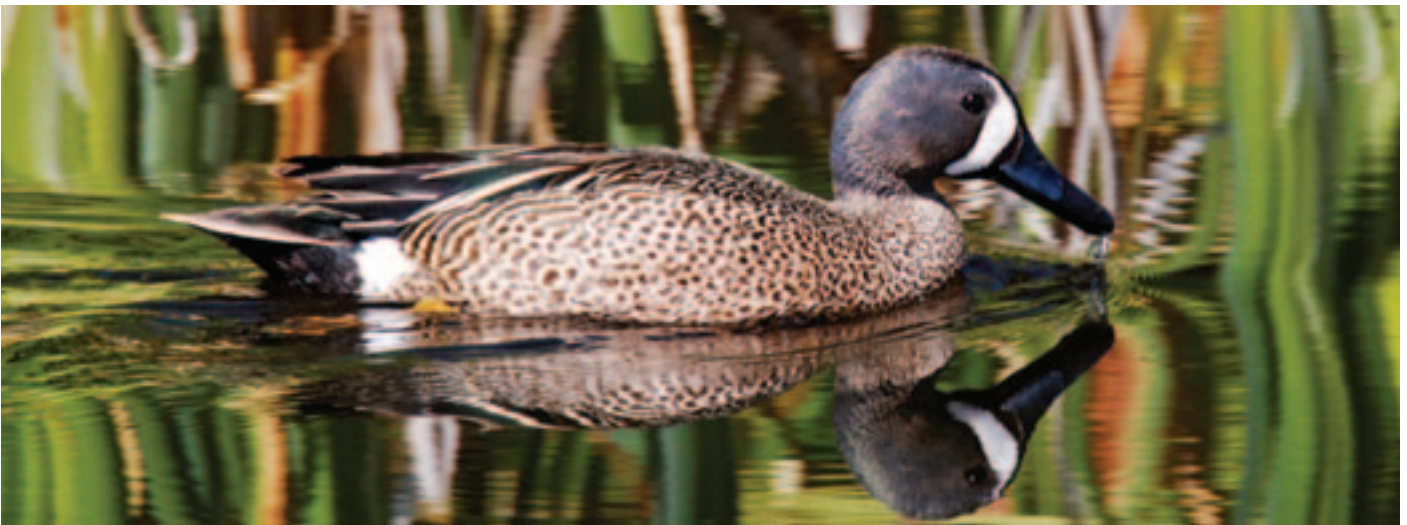


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Blue-winged Teal

Females are a very non-descript mottled brown color. She has to tend to 8-11 eggs laid on dry ground and covered with cattails and grass so she cannot afford to be colorful. She alone will raise the ducklings who will feed themselves once out of the eggs. Imagine that: just born and eyes are open and walking around! She however will stay close and protect them for another 50 days.

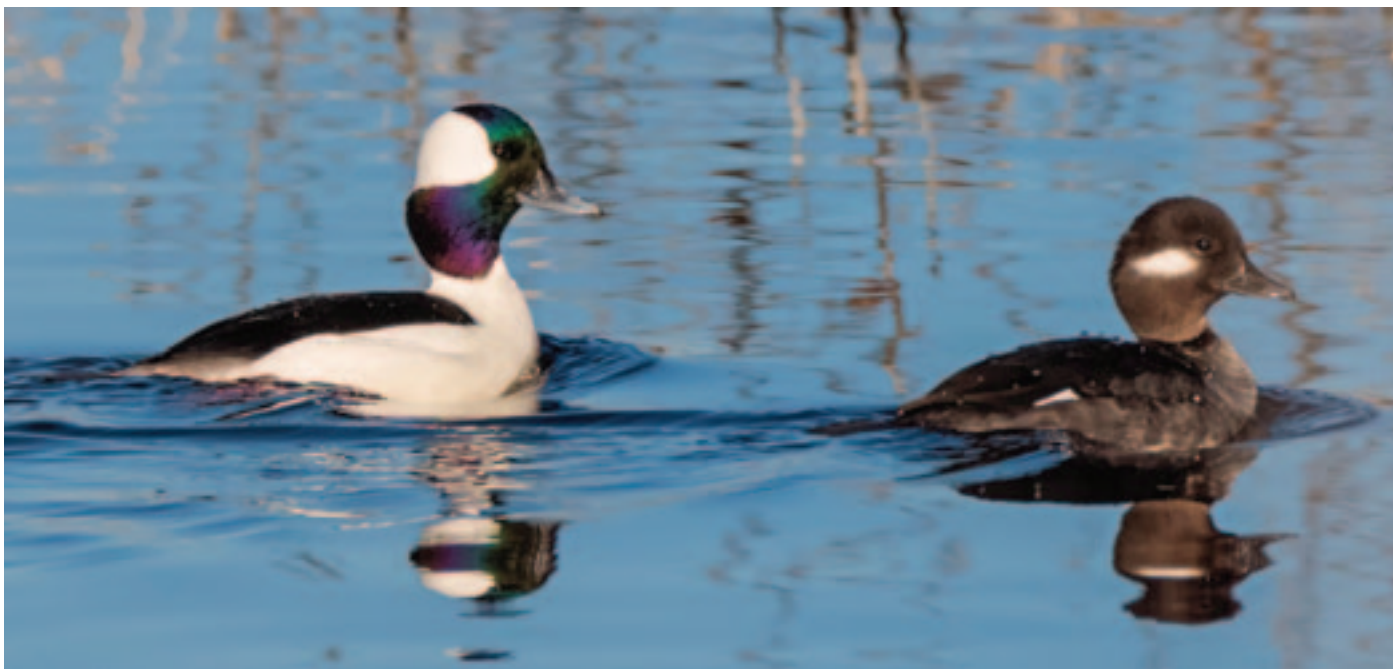
—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



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Bufflehead

(*Bucephala albeola*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 13.5 in.
Wingspan: 21 in.
Weight: 13 oz.

White and black and small defines this male diving duck. As always the female has a quieter appearance. She is small with a white cheek patch and often seen next to the male as this duck tends to be a committed mate.



©Jack Noller



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Bufflehead

The name bufflehead derives from “buffalo head” a reference to the puffy appearance of the head of the male. It is a big head for such a small bird!

The bufflehead dives for mollusks, crustaceans and insect larvae. When feeding in small groups, a sentry usually stays on surface while others dive.



©Mary Williams Hyde

They nest in tree cavities often made by a woodpecker. Eight to ten eggs will be incubated. Once out of the egg, they remain in the nest for 24-36 hours then jump from the cavity and independently feed themselves!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Canada Goose

(*Branta canadensis*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 45 in.
Wingspan: 60 in.
Weight: 9.8 lbs.

What makes a goose a goose? These waterfowl are often in flocks and call loudly in flight. They walk easily on land and are mated for life. It is hard to mistake a Canada Goose for anything else. With their large brownish body and long neck and loud resonant honking sound, they are unmistakable. And the white on the face is called the “toothache” looking reminiscent of when a white cloth was wrapped around a painful tooth.



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Canada Goose

The female does the nest building sometimes on top of muskrat or beaver houses, sometimes in a tree in an abandoned Osprey or heron nest, sometimes even on haystacks. Four to seven eggs are laid in the nest lined with the soft downy breast feathers plucked by the mom. Only the mama goose incubates and the male, called a gander, stands guard nearby. Fresh out of the egg, the babies are fully feathered and able to feed themselves but the parents ferociously protect them from raccoons, ravens, and gulls and other predators.

Young geese remain with their parents for most of the first year of life and sometimes even longer. This is very unusual in the world of birds!



©Mary Williams Hyde

Canada Geese eat crops like wheat, rice, corn and beans. They dine on grasses and are known as the “golf course bird” because large groups are found foraging there and then leaving fertilizer in the form of goose poop!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Canvasback Duck

(*Aythya valisineria*)



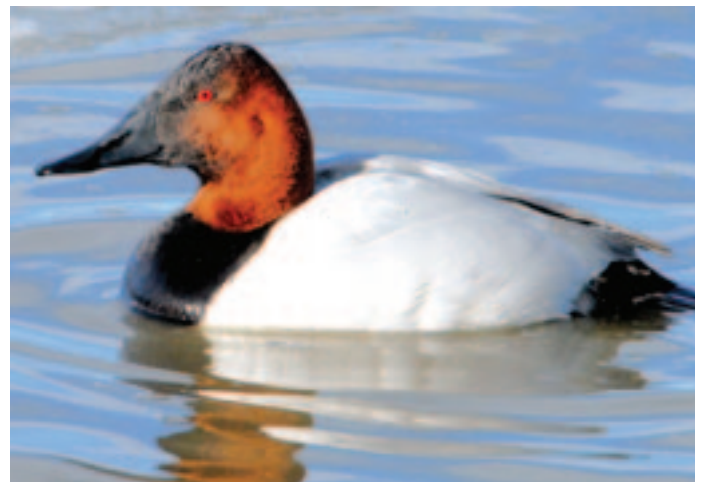
©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 21 in.
Wingspan: 29 in.
Weight: 2.7 lbs.

This large distinctive diving duck has a uniquely sloping head profile. The male indeed has a canvas-colored body with a chestnut-colored head. Females are quieter in their coloration but it is the shape, not plumage, that identifies this duck.



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©Steve Rooker



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Canvasback Duck

Canvasbacks are diving ducks at home in the water, seldom going ashore to dry land. They sleep on the water with their bill tucked under the wing, and they nest on floating mats of vegetation. To get airborne Canvasbacks need a running start, but once in the air they are strong and fast fliers, clocking airspeeds of up to 56 miles per hour.



©Mary Williams Hyde

These birds are at risk due to the increasing destruction of their habitat, such as prairie marshes, potholes, wetlands, and freshwater lakes with dense vegetation. Therefore, conservation efforts are being made to protect the bird and its breeding grounds where it can find food and lay eggs comfortably. The canvasback is also known as the “King of Ducks” due to its royal demeanor and elegance. You can help us protect this regal duck by supporting your local wildlife refuge.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Cinnamon Teal

(*Spatula cyanoptera*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 16 in.
Wingspan: 22 in.
Weight: 14 oz.

What is not to love about a duck with a rich warm cinnamon color, red eye and a sizable black bill. You cannot mistake identifying this duck, except if you are seeing the more quietly colored female. She can be identified by her proximity to the male during breeding season.



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Cinnamon Teal

The female often places her nest below matted dead stems of vegetation. It is concealed on all sides and from above and she approaches the nest thru a tunnel of marshy weeds. Approximately 9-12 eggs are laid and incubate for 21 days. Other ducks like the Redhead, the Ruddy Duck and the Mallard sometimes lay their eggs in this nest. Oh boy, the mommy Teal will have a big job caring for them when they emerge from the egg.



©Loree Johnson

In flight, both males and females show powder blue in the wings as they fly fast and low, timed at nearly 60 miles per hour.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Common Goldeneye

(*Bucephala clangula*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 18 in.
Wingspan: 26 in.
Weight: 2 lbs.

The male has a mostly white body and dark head with a circular white spot on the face. The female is gray with a brown head. Her bill has a yellow tip. Both males and females have golden-colored eyes so they are indeed named correctly: Goldeneye!



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Common Goldeneye

These diving ducks often forage in flocks in fairly shallow waters.

When females are nearby, males frequently display by stretching the head backward against their back and then popping the head forward. What female could resist? After mating, the nests are incubated in a tree cavity. 7-10 eggs hatch in 30 days and then the little ducklings jump from the nest cavity within 48 hours. Believe it or not, they can independently find their own food however the parents stay nearby to protect them from predators.

If the light is right, the black heads of the males will glow an iridescent green.

The distinctive whirring of the wings in flight have resulted in the popular hunters name of “whistler.” Be sure to listen for the wing whir as this sound is delightful.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Common Merganser

(*Mergus merganser*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 25 in.
Wingspan: 34 in.
Weight: 3.4 lb.

Males are crisply patterned with gleaming white bodies and dark, iridescent-green heads. Their long, thin bill is bright red. Females and immature are gray overall yet have a magnificent cinnamon-colored head and sweptback hairdo. Stunning!



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© Loree Johnson



© Mary Williams Hyde

Common Merganser

This diving duck loves to eat fish. Their bill has serrated edges to help them grip their prey.

Would you believe they nest in tree cavities or in holes in banks, beneath boulders, under dense bushes or even in buildings! Usually 9-12 eggs are laid and the baby mergansers are born with their eyes open and finding their own food.

Though some migrate, others are seen year-round on deep clear lakes and rivers.



© Mary Williams Hyde

Being an expert diver, they can pursue and catch the swiftest of fish, like a falcon after a pigeon.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Gadwall

(*Mareca strepera*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 20 in.
Wingspan: 33 in.
Weight: 2 lb.

Male Gadwalls are attired in what appears to be an elegant tweed coat. Both males and females have a squarish-shaped head and thin bill. The female will be quieter in color so she can camouflage while on the nest.



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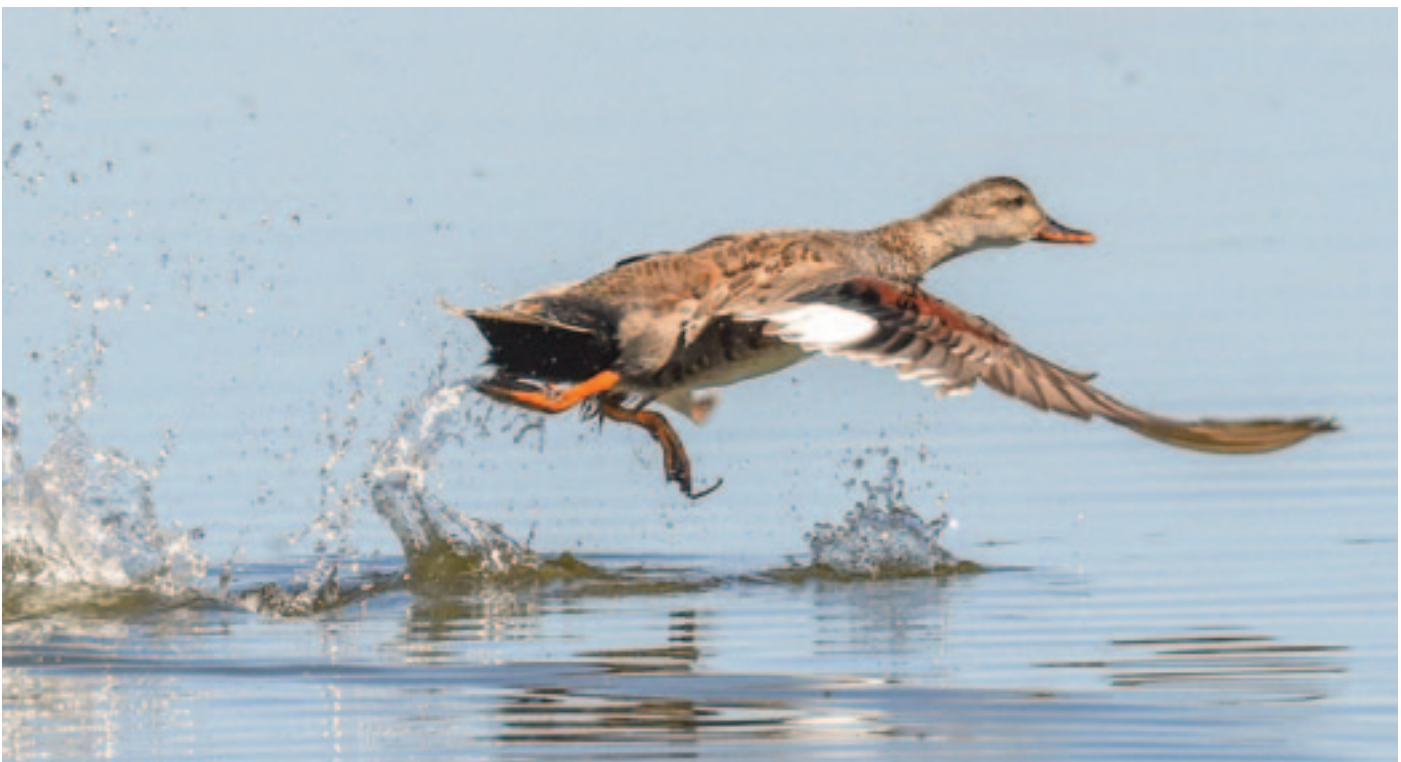
Gadwall

Ducks can dabble by tipping forward to eat aquatic vegetation or dive for aquatic insects. Gadwalls both dabble and dive. These ducks will wander through woodlands to eat nuts, acorns and grains so their diet is varied.

Gadwalls have increased in numbers since the 1980's partly because of conservation of wetlands and adjacent uplands in their breeding habitat.

These ducks will pair up in the winter and have 8-11 baby ducks that will leave the nest within 2 days mobile, downy and finding their own food. Wow, now that is independent at an early age. The parents will follow them around to protect them for about two months. Then, the parents bid them goodbye!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Greater White-fronted Goose

(*Anser albifrons*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 28 in.
Wingspan: 53 in.
Weight: 4.8 lbs.

This goose is nicknamed “specklebelly” because of the black markings on its tummy! The white area around the pink/orange bill is the face hence the name white-fronted.



©Mary Williams Hyde



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©Mary Williams Hyde

Greater White-fronted Goose

These geese mate and have babies in the far north of Alaska and Canada. They are seen in large flocks in the winter as they come south to spend their days eating seeds, grains, grasses, berries and insects.

Geese in general like to call loudly when in flight. The common honk of the white-fronted goose is a high pitched yelling “ho-leeleek.” It rather sounds like they are laughing!

These medium-sized geese tend to choose a mate for life so pairs stay together for years, migrate together and keep their baby geese with them for many months. Parent and sibling relationships may even continue throughout their lives. This is pretty unusual in the world of birds.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



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Green-winged Teal

(*Anas crecca*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 14 in.
Wingspan: 23 in.
Weight: 12 oz.

This teal is a miniature dabbling duck with a brilliant green color in the wing. The male has a stunning reddish colored head with a green racing stripe behind the eye and a distinctive vertical white line between the breast and body that assists in identification. The female, like most ducks, has a quietly brown color to help keep her hidden when incubating eggs and raising ducklings.



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Green-winged Teal

Young green-winged teals are the fastest growing of all ducks in North America. The mama teal incubates eggs for 3 weeks and within two weeks the ducklings are flying. Daddy teal is so bright and conspicuous that he leaves soon after mating.

These teals are fast flyers. The flocks zigzag through the air with rapid wing beats twisting and turning in flight at high speeds of up to 60 miles per hour. How can they fly so fast and not bump into each other? That is a wonderful mystery of nature.

Being bright and beautiful makes it easier for predators like racoons, and foxes to know where the nest might be hidden. Once the male leaves, he molts his vibrantly colored feathers to a subdued brown. This is called an eclipse plumage. Did you know that ducks and all birds molt all of their feathers each year, like getting a "new coat" because feathers do wear out.

–Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Hooded Merganser

(*Lophodytes cucullatus*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 18 in.
Wingspan: 24 in.
Weight: 1.4 lb.

The male merganser really “takes the cake” when it comes to dramatic plumage. The crest of his head goes from having a white thin center to having a gloriously raised fan shape during mating season. Add to that his yellow eye and slender beak and he is a dandy indeed. Though less dramatic in appearance, the female still has a magnificent brown crest. They make a stunning pair.



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Hooded Merganser

Mergansers are basically diving ducks with thin serrated bills which they use to catch and hold small fish, aquatic insects and crayfish.

Would you believe their nest is an old woodpecker-made hole or in a nest box. Their 10-12 eggs incubate for one month. When the babies are born, they are fuzzy and open-eyed and jump from the nesting hole and find their own food. Mama merganser will stay nearby and protect them for 2 more months.

Though mostly silent, the male will utter a croaking grunt that sounds like a frog in order to attract the female! Fortunately he expands the white crest on his head also! Like many ducks, he does not stick around to help incubate or protect the babies. Every species has its own strategy for breeding and this is what works for the Hooded Merganser.

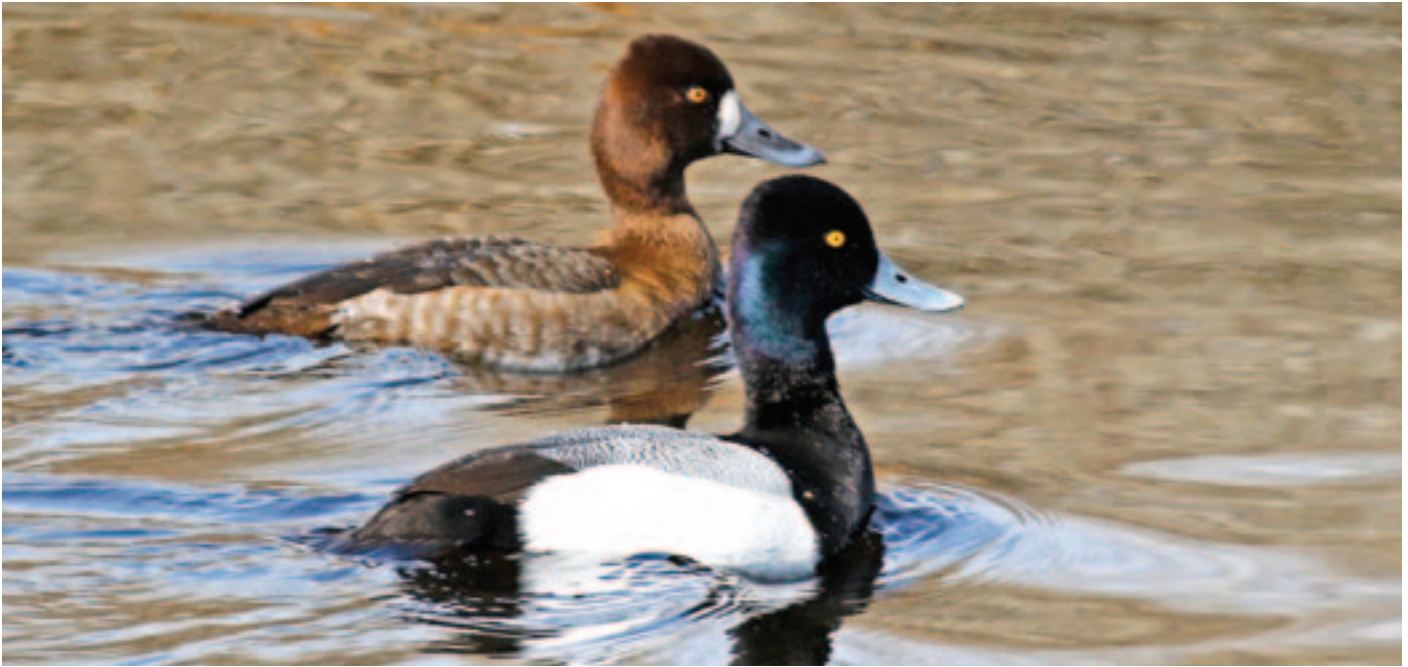
—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Lesser Scaup

(*Aythya affinis*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 16 in.
Wingspan: 25 in.
Weight: 1.8 lb.

Male scaups are black at both ends and white in the middle. This diving duck is called “bluebill” because of the color of its bill. The female is a somber brown with white at the base of the bill.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Lesser Scaup

The female lays 9-12 eggs and incubates them for 24 days. The baby scaups are born with feathers and eyes open and able to feed themselves. This is often what happens when the nest is on the ground. Babies have to get up and get going!



©Mary Williams Hyde

Scaups are one of our most abundant ducks in North America. OK then, why are they called lesser? Because they are slightly smaller than Greater Scaups, which are very similar.

When alarmed by a predator, they pretend to be asleep even though they are awake and alert. In fact, when a fox tries to eat them, they pretend to be dead. Then they look for the opportunity to quickly fly away. Survival is a constant challenge and that is why we have to protect wetlands for these dandy ducks.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Mallard Duck

(*Anas platyrhynchos*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 23 in.
Wingspan: 35 in.
Weight: 2.4 lbs.

The male Mallard is a handsome dabbling duck with green head, yellow bill, white collar, plum colored breast, gray back, light body and cute curly black tail feathers between white ones. The females and juveniles are mottled brown.



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



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Mallard Duck

The camouflaged coloration of the female and kids helps them to blend into natural surroundings. The male has a dramatic appearance to attract the female. She incubates the eggs and cares for the ducklings without help from the male. A preference is shown for nesting on islands close to Canada Geese where the ducks benefit from the protection of the geese from predators like raccoons, skunks, crows and ravens.

The female called a “hen” lays 8-15 eggs. She plucks down from her belly to line the nest and keep the eggs warm. After 28 days, the little chicks emerge. They are downy and able to find their own food but need the protection of mama hen. In two months the fledglings will fly off and be independent. Mallards can live up to 16 years though most live 1-2 years as life is risky. Other predators include red fox, hawks, snakes, cats and hunters.



©Loree Johnson

The Mallard is the most abundant and recognized of all the ducks. It is the ancestor of many domestic breeds and an important food source among peoples of the world for thousands of years.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Northern Pintail

(*Anas acuta*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 23 in.
Wingspan: 34 in.
Weight: 1.8 lb.

The male is among the most elegant of ducks, being slender and long-necked and with narrow wings. Aptly, he is named pintail for the stellar long and pointed tail. His beak is two-toned being both black and blue. Easily overlooked and underappreciated is the slender mottled-brown female. She does have the long neck that lets you know she is a pintail.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Jack Noller



©Mary Williams Hyde

Northern Pintail

The female pintail builds her nest in a depression on the ground with leaves and sticks and grasses. The nest is often in an agricultural field, grassland or on open tundra and not particularly near water. The 6-12 eggs produce babies that have to get up and get going once out of the egg. They will feed themselves with mama pintail nearby. Their diet is 90% vegetation such as seeds and grains but they do eat insects and tadpoles as well.



©Mary Williams Hyde

Pintails are graceful flyers. They have a fast zig-zag style of flight.

When not breeding, you can find pintails in large groups. This is common for several species seen in winter. Being in a group is protective!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Northern Shoveler

(*Spatula clypeata*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 19 in.
Wingspan: 30 in.
Weight: 1.3 lbs.

This duck uses its impressive bill to “shovel” in aquatic vegetation and insects. A group will circle around food and herd snails and clams and plankton into the bill which can then strain out mud and other junk! No other duck has a bill like this so you cannot mistake it. Also the male has a white chest, lovely rusty-brown body. Females survive by being a camouflaged brown but still with the big bill.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Jack Noller



©Loree Johnson

Northern Shoveler

Other distinguishing features are the yellow eye and green head of the male. In flight the males flash blue on the upper wing and green lower down.

Like most ducks, the nests are on the ground and the 10 eggs become independent ducklings when they hatch finding their own food from day one. Mama stays nearby to protect them.

Can we talk about that bill some more? Known as an aquatic vacuum cleaner, this duck also called “spoonbill” has more than 100 little edges on the bill. These are called lamellae and act like a sieve.

By the way, hunters do not care for the taste of this dabbling duck because of the insects and crustaceans it eats. Oh well, good news for the shoveler!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Redhead Duck

(*Aythya americana*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 19 in.
Wingspan: 29 in.
Weight: 2.3 lb.

Sometimes a bird is named correctly. The male Redhead has a beautiful red head! He is a medium-size diving duck with a pretty blue bill and has a bright orange eye. His body is mostly gray. The female is a typical non-descript brown color necessary for blending into reeds and cattails where she might have a nest.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Jack Noller



©Jack Noller



©Jack Noller

Redhead Duck

The female Redhead lays 9-13 eggs. Sometimes she deposits some of her eggs in the nest of other ducks and lets THAT mama duck incubate and raise her kids! This habit known as “egg dumping” is very common among waterfowl, however the Redhead may get the prize for doing it the most.

Female ducks are called “hens.” Not only does the hen leave her eggs in the nest of other Redheads but also in many other species of ducks and even species that are not ducks like Coots and Bitterns and even a marsh hawk known as the Harrier. Now, that is pretty gutsy. But remember that every bird wants to make babies that survive and the ways to do that are varied. We get to be curious about all the different strategies. What is most important? That each and every species survives.



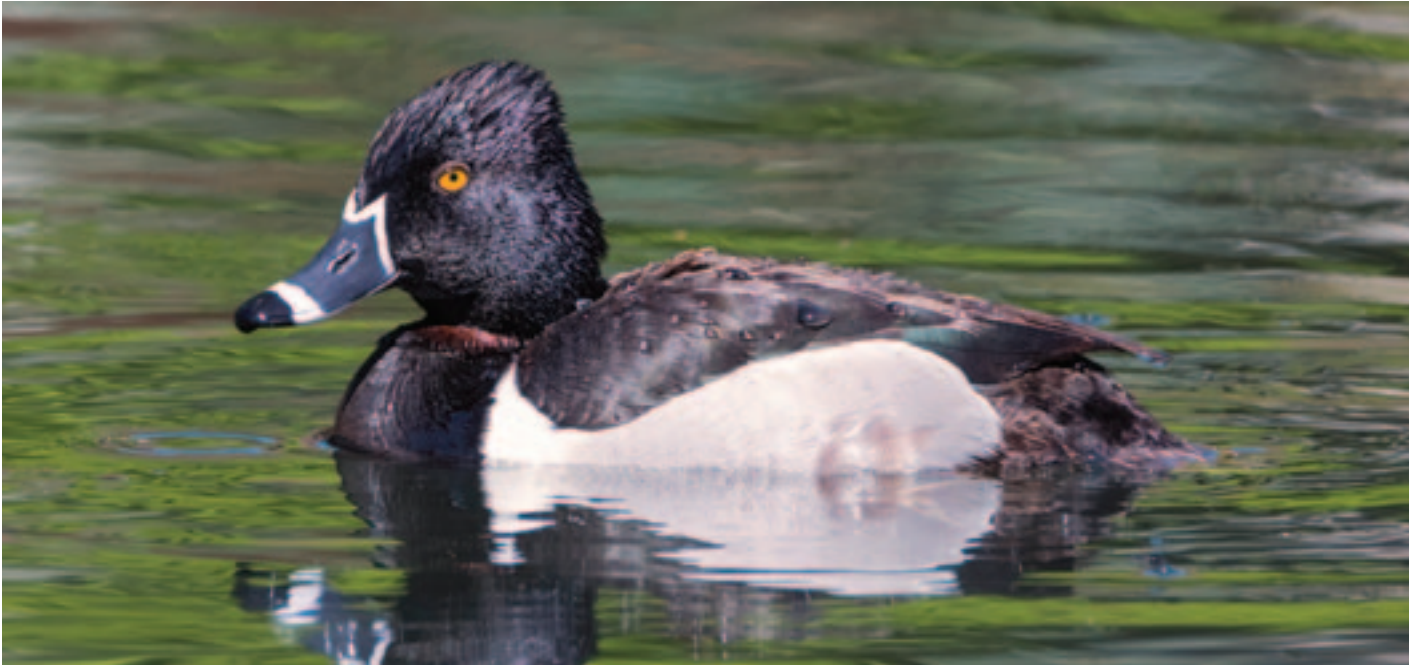
©Mary Williams Hyde

Courting male Redheads perform a gymnastic “head throw” display, bending nearly in half with the neck bent far over the back until the head touches the tail. The bird then snaps its neck forward while giving a loud, catlike meow call. The things a guy has to do to wow a girl duck!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Ring-necked Duck

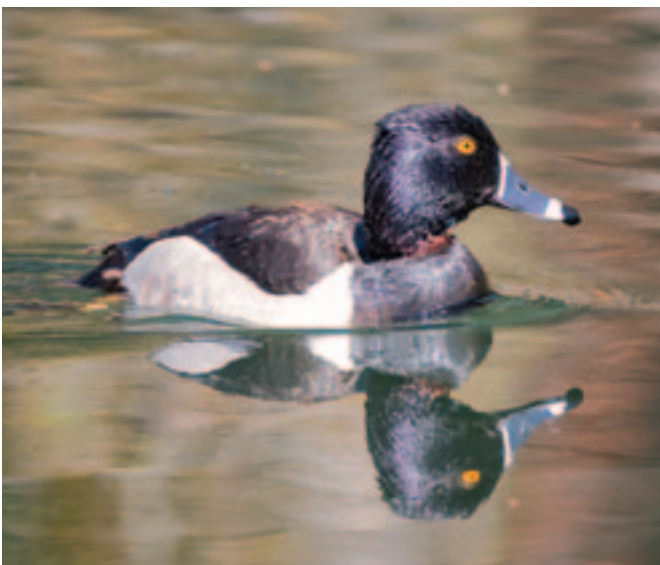
(*Aythya collaris*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 17 in.
Wingspan: 25 in.
Weight: 1.5 lbs.

Why isn't this medium sized duck called a ringed-bill duck? The bill of the male is blue-gray with a white and black tip. The head is conical, the eye is orange and there is a white shoulder spur which helps identify this lovely diving duck.



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Ring-necked Duck

Sometimes the best way to identify a female duck is if it is hanging out next to a male. However, the female ring-necked duck has white at the base of the bill and also has a faint pale shoulder spur.

Females will lay between 6 and 14 eggs. The daddy duck will remain with his mate through incubation which takes 26 days. Babies are born eyes open, mobile, downy, finding their own food but with mama duck close by for protection.



©Mary Williams Hyde

OK then, how did this duck get its name? Back when birds were named, they were shot and studied. When dead, the cinnamon ring around the neck was more obvious, hence the name.

Being a diving duck, they eat aquatic plants and insects. And guess who eats them? Foxes, eagles, raccoons, crows and even large fish will eat the baby ducklings. It is challenging being a baby duck!

–Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Ross's Goose

(*Anser rossii*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 23 in.
Wingspan: 45 in.
Weight: 2.7 lbs.

This small white goose has black wingtips and is one half the weight of its look-alike species, the Snow Goose. Another way to tell the difference is its rounder head and smaller red-orange bill. Because it hangs out with the abundant Snow Goose in winter in a large white carpet that covers either water or fields, it just may be hard to pick out.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Ross's Goose

Another way it is similar to the Snow Goose is that some of these are not white, but rather they have dark feathers on part of the head and body. They are called the “blue goose” morph of the Ross Goose even though they are not blue. Go figure!

Where does this species mate and have baby goslings? Mostly in the Canadian tundra where they nest on the ground and incubate 4-7 eggs. Goslings leave the ground nest once out of the egg and feed themselves a diet of aquatic insects and plants. The parents stay nearby to protect them for 45 days and then it is time to migrate south for the winter to fatten up.

Even with being hunted, this goose has a large population. They can live up to 20 years which gives them time to learn wariness and keep from being shot and eaten. Also, climate change has warmed their arctic breeding grounds resulting in less snow and more plants to eat. Their current worldwide population is more than one million geese! Enjoy a visit to a refuge in winter along the Pacific flyway to take in the majestic sight and sounds of the stunning Ross and Snow Geese. I have had this experience and remember crying with the joy of it.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Ruddy Duck

(*Oxyura jamaicensis*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 15 in.
Wingspan: 18.5 in.
Weight: 1.2 lbs.

The male ruddy duck is a handsome small diving duck with a large head, white cheek patches and a bright blue bill. His beautiful chestnut colored body and perky stiff upright tail are designed to dazzle the quietly colored brown female.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Jack Noller



©Mary Williams Hyde

Ruddy Duck

The male courtship ritual includes hitting his bill against his chest, making a belching sound and surrounding himself with bubbles! The female lays 6-10 eggs often in the nest of another duck!



©Mary Williams Hyde

Insects are the favorite food in summer and in winter they mostly eat plants.

The ruddy duck often dives or swims away from danger rather than flying. When flying, their small wings stroke so fast they resemble bumblebees.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Snow Goose

(*Anser caerulescens*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 28 in.
Wingspan: 53 in.
Weight: 5.3 lbs.

Watching huge flocks of Snow Geese swirl down from the sky, amid a cacophony of honking, is a little like standing inside a snow globe. These loud, white-and-black geese can cover the ground in a snowy blanket as they eat their way across fallow cornfields or wetlands. – allaboutbirds.org



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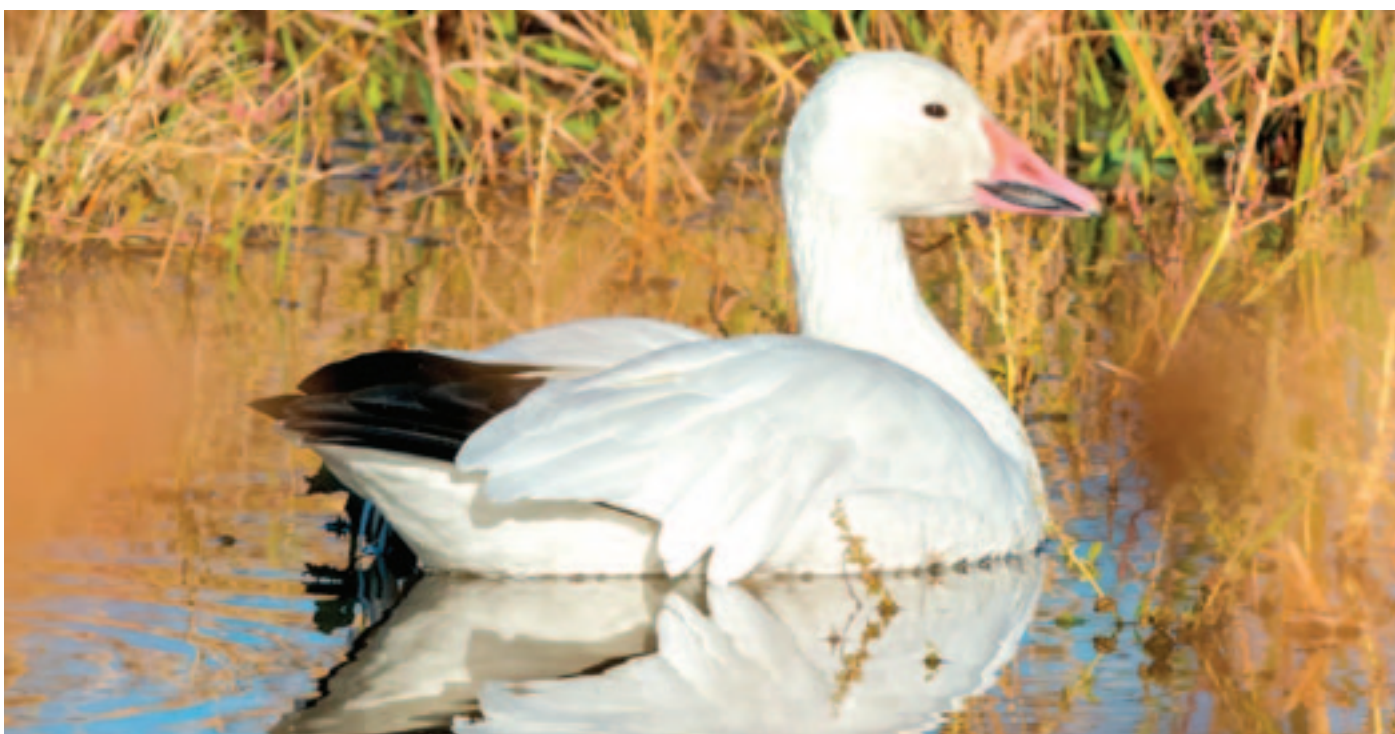


©Mary Williams Hyde

Snow Goose

This species has two color morphs. The most common is white while the other morph has a dark appearance on the body and sometimes on the head as well. This is called a “blue goose.” One of the fun aspects of birding is looking for the unusual darker goose. Can you see the difference in the photos?

The face is often stained orange or rust as a result of foraging in iron rich fields or it may be sullied with a muck mask if foraging in the muddy marsh. Look for what is called the “grin patch” which is where the upper and lower beak have a gap. Some say it looks like it is grimacing!



©Loree Johnson

In summer, breeding occurs on the arctic tundra where there are lots of protein-rich insects for the newly hatched goslings. In winter, flocks come south to eat grass, grain, bulbs, seeds, berries and more insects. Again, check out the photos to count not just the hundreds or thousands but tens of thousands that visit refuges and fields in Oregon, California and Mexico.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Trumpeter Swan

(*Cygnus buccinator*)



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 60 in.
Wingspan: 80 in.
Weight: 23-33 lbs.

If you see a large white “sailing ship” of a bird with an elegant long neck and black bill, consider yourself fortunate. This is our largest North American waterfowl: the Trumpeter Swan.



©Loree Johnson

Trumpeter Swan

By the late 1800's swans were killed so their feathers could be used to adorn women's hats, long feathers were used for writing quills and skins used for powder puffs. By 1930 only 66 Trumpeter Swans remained. A program consisting of protection from hunting, habitat restoration and relocating swans to protected places has resulted in saving this species from extinction.

These swans find their mate when 3 to 4 years of age and stay together for life. Their nests of marsh plants are often built on muskrat houses. The 4-6 eggs incubate for a month. Babies are born feeding themselves with protective parents nearby. It will take 4 months for them to fledge, meaning fly off to start their own swan life! It will take 2 years for them to get their snowy white plumage. They may join flocks for the first few years. Being in a flock helps the swans survive as they feed together, migrate together and warn of predators for each other.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



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Tundra Swan

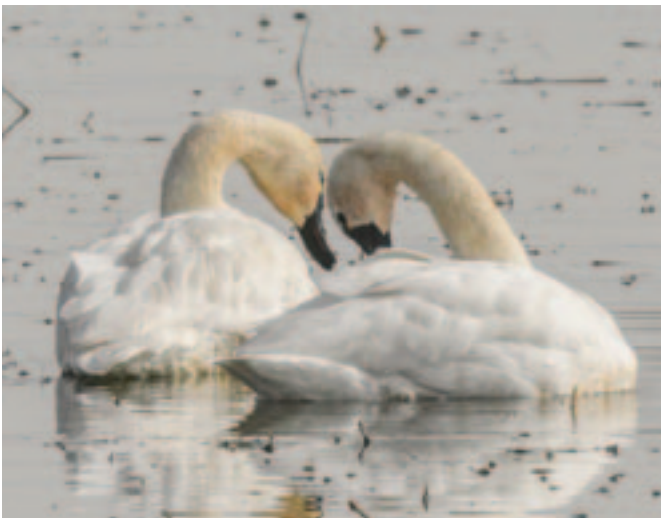
(*Cygnus columbianus*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 49 in.
Wingspan: 75 in.
Weight: 14 lbs.

This swan is gloriously white unless it is a dusky-colored juvenile. Upon its slender neck is a white head having a black bill with pink along the gape that makes it look like it is grinning. Some swans have an oval yellow area on the bill and in front of the eye.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Tundra Swan

Tundra Swans are highly social. They migrate, roost and forage together sometimes in family groups, more often in large flocks. You might see them in winter at refuges in Washington, Oregon and California. They breed in the far north Alaskan tundra.

Their call is one of the greatest sounds in nature. It has an eerie, haunting, winsome quality that is part whoop and part sigh. A favorite nickname is “whistling swan.”

Swans feed mostly on vegetation such as sago pondweed and stems and roots of aquatic plants. Using their feet, they rake marsh roots and rhizomes thus leaving behind a rich soup of plant material. Ducks and geese follow behind them to snack on the leftovers!



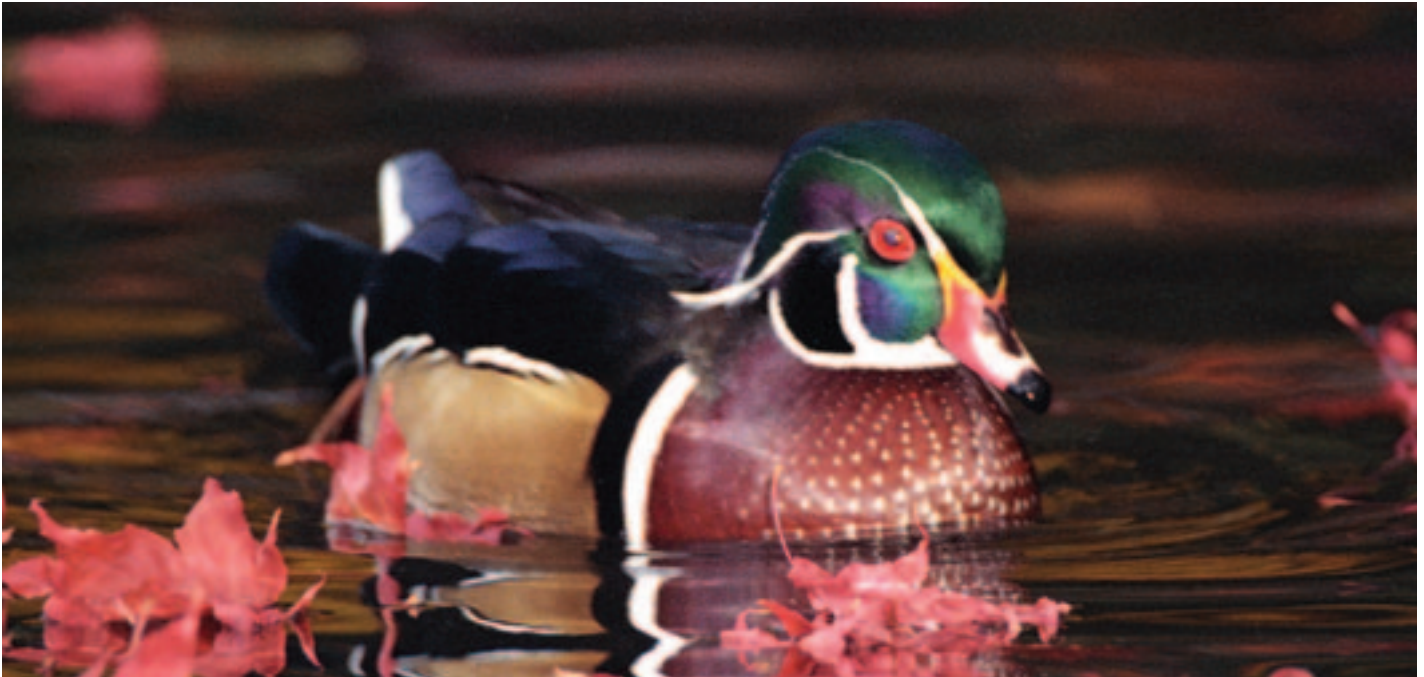
©Loree Johnson

Have you ever wondered how many feathers a bird has? Well, Tundra Swans have 25,316 feathers. Do not ask me who did the counting but it did come from a reliable source.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Wood Duck

(*Aix sponsa*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 18.5 in.
Wingspan: 30 in.
Weight: 1.3 lbs.

The wood duck is undoubtedly one of the most colorful ducks in North America. Sporting bright colors with white outlines, and piercing red eyes, the drake (male) is a showstopper. The hen (female) is less colorful, but still wears white outlines and white teardrop decorations around her eyes. Both sexes have a drooping crest that suggests they are wearing helmets.



©Loree Johnson



©Jack Noller

Wood Duck

While more than eighty percent of their diet is made up of plants and vegetation, they will also supplement with insects and small water creatures, which makes them omnivores. If there is not enough to eat in the water, they will take to land to forage for nuts, berries and grain.

Unlike most ducks, wood ducks nest in tree cavities. This is where they got their name, as they inhabit wooded areas. In places where tree cavities are scarce, they have been known to use human-provided wood duck nest houses. They can be harder to find than other ducks, since they like to remain in the cover of overhanging branches, even while swimming.

The pair will search for a tree that has rotted for a nest cavity. They prefer higher sites over water, up to sixty feet in the air. This means that when their large brood (6-16 chicks) hatches, they must jump from the nest to the water or land under them. The little ones make the long jump when they are just one day old!

— Loree Johnson



©Jack Noller



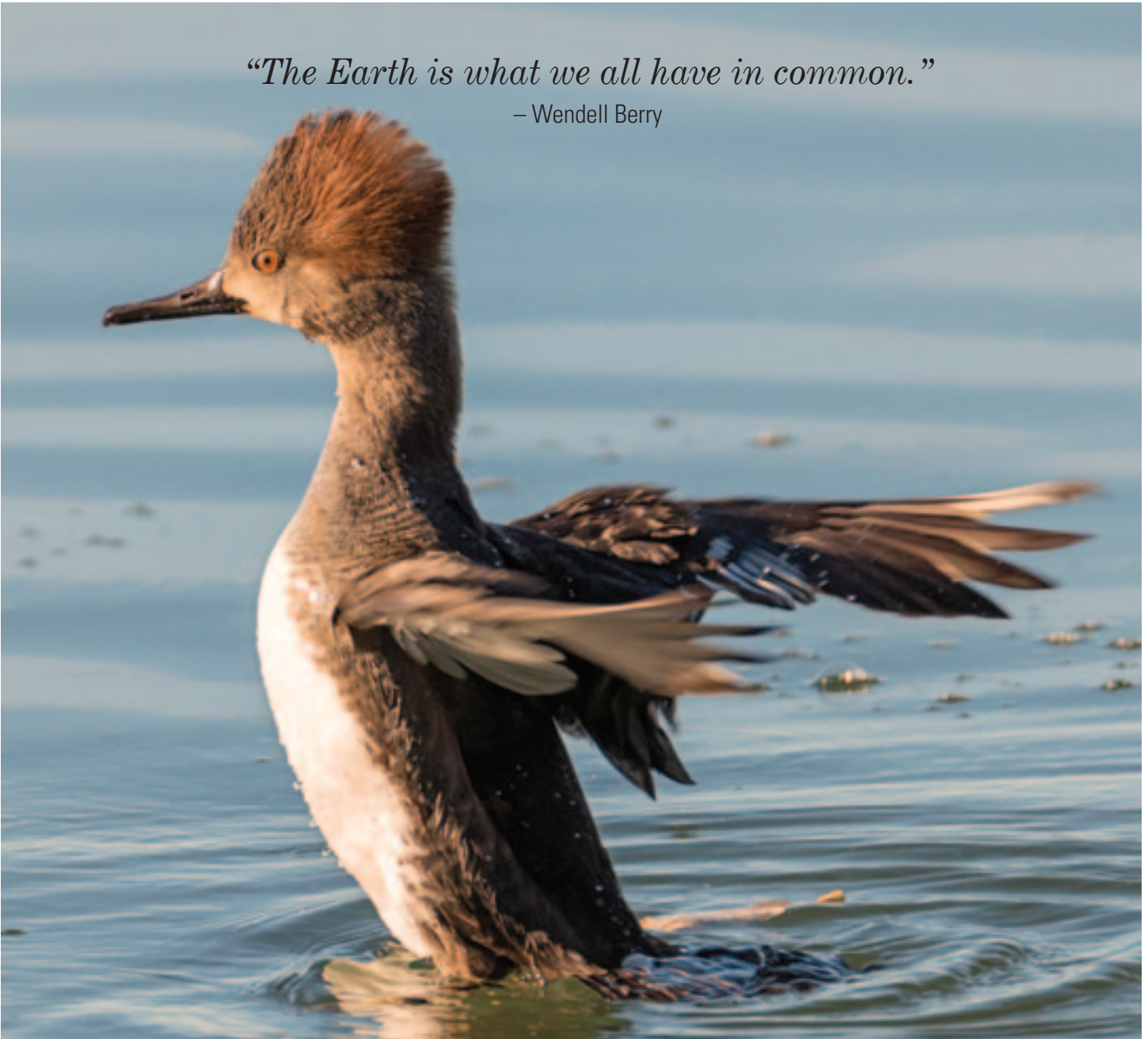
Gadwall drake © Loree Johnson



Gadwall Hen © Loree Johnson

“The Earth is what we all have in common.”

– Wendell Berry



Immature Hooded Merganser drake ©Loree Johnson

Ethical Birding Guidelines:

- Be aware of sensitive and threatened species that might be vulnerable to disturbance.
- Do not share nest locations of sensitive species except with appropriate wildlife officials or conservation scientists.
- Stay at a distance where you are not agitating birds or modifying their behavior, especially near nests.
- Leave dogs at home or on a leash if in an area with ground nesting birds. Shorebirds, such as Snowy Plovers, that nest on beaches are especially vulnerable to loose dogs.
- Limit use of pishing and playback — Do not use in heavily birded areas or for sensitive species.
- Drive slowly and carefully. Stay in your vehicle if possible.
- Stay on designated trails, do not trample vegetation.
- If leading a birding group, be aware of group size and make sure it is not so large that it is damaging the habitat or interfering with others using the same area.
- Make sure all group members are aware of and practicing ethical birding guidelines.
- Respect private property rights, only enter with express permission.
- Follow all traffic rules, drive the speed limit, don't park on the road, keep eyes on the road.
- Don't point binoculars towards other people or directly into yards or windows.
- Always be polite and courteous to non-birders you encounter, share your knowledge when appropriate.
- If birding with others, be respectful of the ability of all group members, be encouraging and share your knowledge with beginners.

– By eBird Northwest Team
 • <https://ebird.org>

Eared Grebe

(*Podiceps nigricollis*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 13 in.
Wingspan: 16 in.
Weight: 11 oz.

When breeding, this little grebe has a black body with chestnut sides and stunning bright yellow plumes behind crimson red eyes.

The nest is a floating raft of matted aquatic vegetation. Grebes shape the nest by sitting on it and piling weeds around itself.



©Jack Noller



©Loree Johnson



©Jack Noller



©Mary Williams Hyde

Eared Grebe

Grebes dive to pursue their favorite food of aquatic insects, larvae, and small fish. They pick feathers from their own bellies to eat. This aids in digestion and protects their tummy from sharp fish bones!

For nine to ten months each year this species is flightless. In order for this to occur, the pectoral (chest) muscles shrink, the digestive organs grow and great fat deposits accumulate. During this time, they double their weight! Then prior to migration, digestive organs become smaller and the heart and flight feathers develop. They lose weight in order to fly from wintering grounds in Mexico and Southern USA to breeding areas in northern states and Canada.

Baby grebes are born mobile and downy. They climb onto the parents back where they are fed nutritious snacks of insects and fish. After 21 days of this, the parents dive to get the babies off their backs thus giving them the message to go feed themselves!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Pied-billed Grebe

(*Podilymbus podiceps*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 13 in.
Wingspan: 16 in.
Weight: 1 lb.

This small diving waterbird is not a duck! It has lobed toes not the webbed toes of a duck. Their legs are contained within body skin and the toes are so far back that they cannot walk very well on land. But because of this, they are superb divers.



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



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©Mary Williams Hyde

Pied-billed Grebe

These grebes mostly eat fish. They also enjoy insects, snails and frogs. Eating feathers is necessary to protect their stomach from sharp fish bones.

While breeding, the bill is white with a black band (“pied”). Juveniles have black and white and orange-striped faces. You have to admit that they are mighty cute!

Grebes can regulate how buoyant they are by compressing their feathers. It can leap up and dive head first or sink slowly like a submarine.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Clark's Grebe

(*Aechmophorus clarkii*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 25 in.
Wingspan: 24 in.
Weight: 3.1 lbs.

Dancing across the water certainly gets one attention! These elegant waterbirds are black and white with a long neck. This grebe looks a lot like the Western Grebe except it has a brighter bill, white feathers around the eye and grayer back.



Mary Williams Hyde



©Jack Noller



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Clark's Grebe

All grebes carry their babies on their backs. They feed them fish often passing it back to the baby grebes for two months and then ENOUGH! It is then time for the young grebes to find their own food.

When the grebes rise up to run over the water surface, this is known as “rushing.” Other courtship displays include a weed ceremony where plants are passed back and forth. People come from far away to the Klamath Basin and wetlands of the west just to see this bird ballet!



©Mary Williams Hyde

Favorite food for grebes are fish, salamanders, grasshoppers, worms and aquatic insects. YUM!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Western Grebe

(*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 25 in.
Wingspan: 24 in.
Weight: 3.3 lbs.

Western Grebes are black and white waterbirds with lobed toes, long necks and distinctive red eyes. To catch fish, they dive below the surface where they also capture worms, salamanders, insects and crustaceans to eat. People come from all over the world to the Klamath Basin to delight in seeing the elegant grebes and their courtship dance.



©Jack Noller



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Western Grebe

Because of its long graceful neck, this diving waterbird is also known as the “swan grebe.” The mating ritual of grebes is famous for when they raise their two foot body out of the water to pitter-patter across the surface...it looks like a perfect ballet move. They also have other mating behaviors including a weed ceremony where they rise up and spiral around one another holding weeds in their beaks. All of this leads to building a floating platform nest made of vegetation. Usually 3-4 eggs are incubated until 23 days later when the grebe babies are born. They arrive fully feathered with eyes open and climb onto the parents’ backs where they are fed fish and aquatic insects.



©Mary Williams Hyde

All grebes also eat feathers pulled from their chest. It is thought this protects their digestive system from sharp fish bones. The chest feathers of the grebe are dense, waterproof, and sleek. In the early 1900’s the grebes were captured and killed so this “grebe fur” could be used to make handbags and muffs.

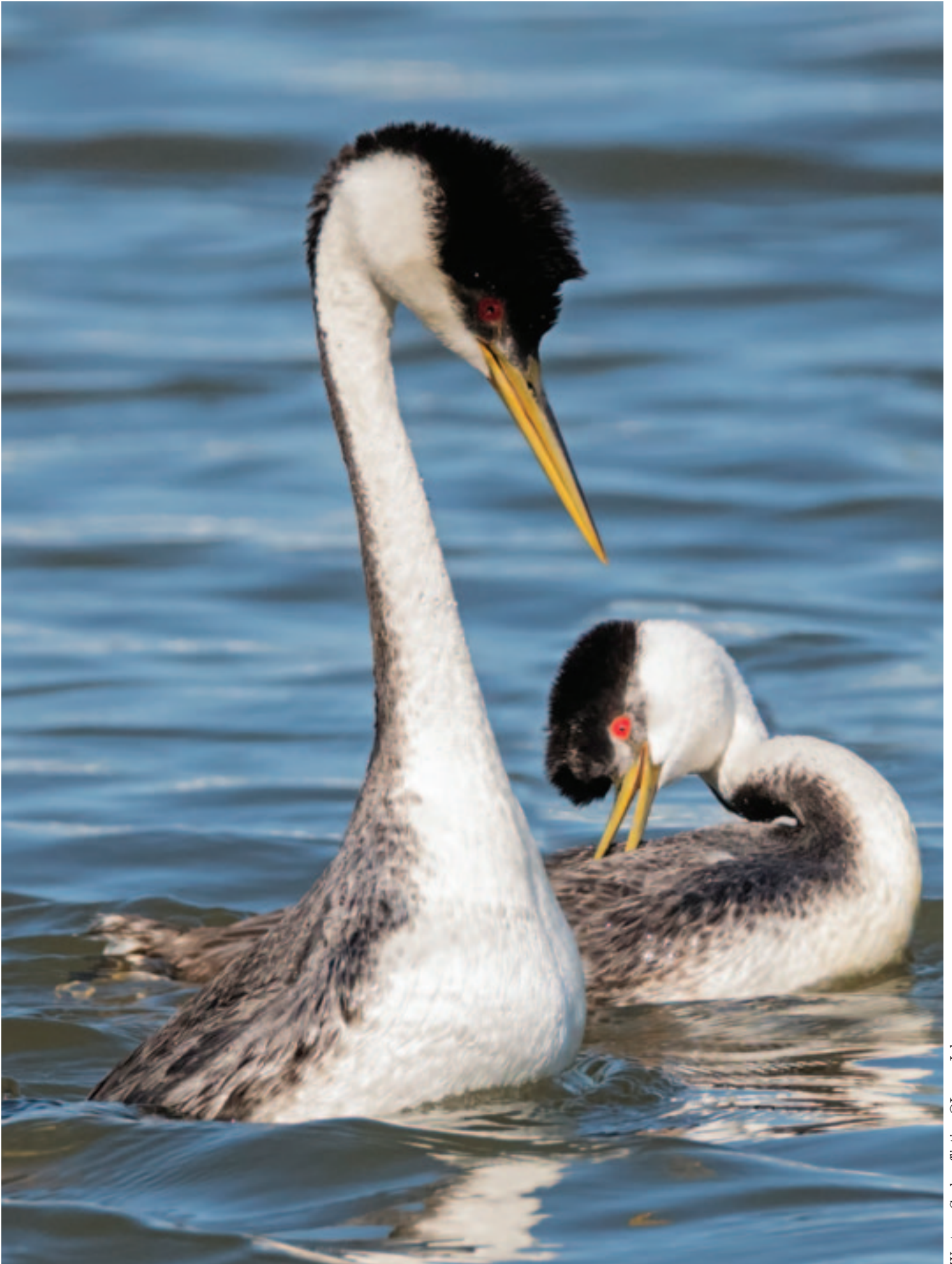
Designating land for wildlife refuges and protective laws helped stop this tragic mass killing. This grebe migrates to coastal waters and southern warmer climates for the winter. It returns in the spring to the Great Basin area to dance and mate and breed.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



*"There is no Wi-Fi in the
forest, but I promise you will
find a better connection."*

– Ralph Smart



Bonaparte's Gull

(*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 13.5 in.
Wingspan: 33 in.
Weight: 7 oz.

Smallest of the common gulls, Bonaparte's Gulls gather in flocks, but usually do not mix with other gulls. Instead, because of the same prey, they can often be found foraging over water with terns, where they pluck prey from the surface of the water.



©Loree Johnson



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©Mary Williams Hyde

Bonaparte's Gull

They are fast and graceful fliers, which enables them to catch insects in mid-air, making them their primary diet in spring and summer. In winter, when insects are scarce, small fish and crustaceans are their foods of choice.

In breeding season, they sport a sleek, black hood and bright orange-red legs, which change to only a small dark ear-spot and pink legs in winter. Instead of migrating north and south, these birds usually migrate east or west to the nearest coast in winter.

The only gull species known to regularly nest in trees, Bonaparte's Gulls are also at home nesting on marsh vegetation if no trees are available. Males and females split the family responsibilities equally, with both parents working on the nest, incubating the eggs, and tending the chicks. — Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde

California Gull

(*Larus californicus*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 21 in.
Wingspan: 54 in.
Weight: 1.3 lbs.

Gulls in general are a gregarious species found in open areas, usually near or on water. They are omnivorous which means they eat everything, including fruit from trees, little birds, mice, worms and they scavenge garbage dumps. Do not be surprised if this gull steals your french fries!



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

California Gull

This medium-sized gull takes 4 years to get its adult white and gray plumage. Until then, this and most gulls are mottled gray. Identifying gulls by their species is no easy task.

This gull nests on the ground in huge colonies on inland lakes and marshes. During breeding season, I suggest you do not call them a “SEAgull.” They do winter along the coast.

In 1848 in Utah the land was plagued with crickets which the California Gull descended upon. Sweeping the land clean by eating them, they saved the plants. A monument was erected to celebrate them in Salt Lake City. More proof of how birds help people not just by being beautiful.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Caspian Tern

(*Hydroprogne caspia*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 21 in.
Wingspan: 50 in.
Weight: 1.4 lb.

The largest tern in the world is easily recognized by its brilliant red fish-knife of a bill and deep, raspy call and handsome black cap. Terns are closely related to gulls but they are more elegant with their graceful flight. They have slender wings and long pointed bills and are always looking down for fish to eat.



©Loree Johnson



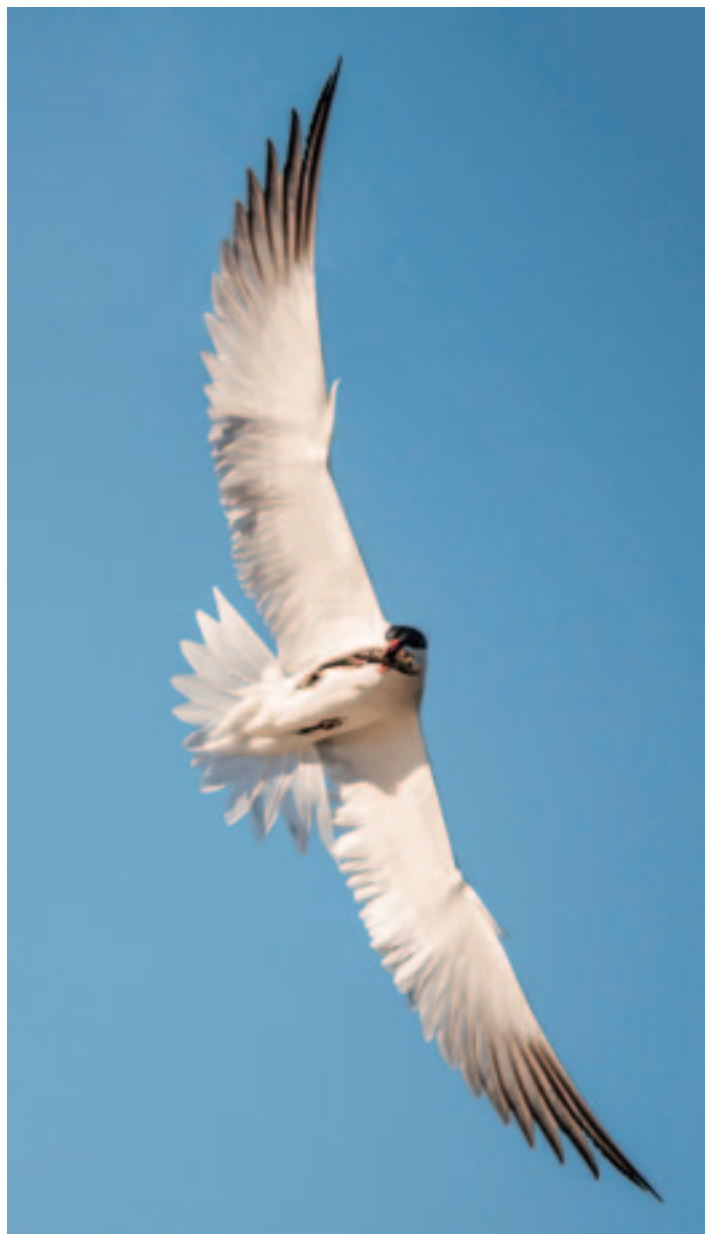
©Loree Johnson

Caspian Tern

The Caspian Tern defends its breeding colony chasing off predators and can even cause bloody wounds on the heads of people who are near their young. They feed their fledglings for 5-7 months which is a long time of parental care. The kids just really will not leave!

Caspian Terns do not breed until they are 3-years old. Pairs breed by themselves or in small colonies usually on islands. They may also attach themselves to colonies of Ring-Billed Gulls. Both of the parents build the nest which is a shallow depression in the sand lined with vegetation & shells. The female will lay 2-3 spotted buff eggs. Both parents incubate the eggs and care for the young. Every species of bird has a strategy for having babies and being successful parents. Can you see how much humans and birds are alike?

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde

Forster's Tern

(*Plegadis chihi*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 13 in.
Wingspan: 31 in.
Weight: 6 oz.

Dressed in a luxurious plumage, this tern was shot by plume hunters in the early 1900's to adorn women's hats. The 1919 Migratory Bird Treaty Act put an end to this practice. But the long, tapered wings and elegantly forked tail aren't just for looks. These birds are considered beautiful, but the reason they are so slender and sleek is they are precise flying machines. Having the ability to plunge dive and catch fish in their bill, they can also snag insects in mid-flight.



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde

Forster's Tern

In breeding season, they wear a black cap, which recedes to a black eye patch when non-breeding. The bill is mostly reddish-orange, with a small black tip.

These terns live mostly in marshes, building their nests on small islands, deserted muskrat houses and on clumps of floating vegetation. The male and female will take turns incubating 1-4 eggs. Baby terns are born fully feathered and mobile and fed by the fiercely protective parents.

It's no wonder Forster's Terns gather in large groups to feed. Their enthusiastic calls when hunting almost always attract other birds. Go out to the marsh and watch and listen for the beautiful Forster's Tern!

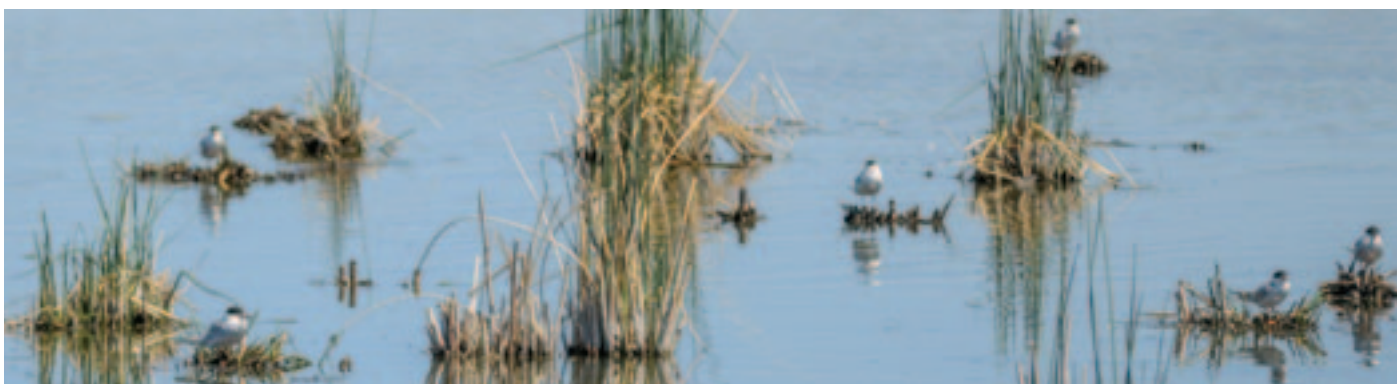
— Loree Johnson



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©Mary Williams Hyde

Franklin's Gull

(*Leucophaeus pipixcan*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 14.5 in.
Wingspan: 36 in.
Weight: 10 oz.

In breeding plumage this gull has a black head with a broken white eye ring. Gulls are one of the hardest species to ID but this stunning gull with its deep red bill shouts out to us that it is a Franklin's Gull.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



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©Mary Williams Hyde

Franklin's Gull

This social gull nests in large colonies in eastern Oregon, Northern USA and Canada. The nests are large floating masses of dead reeds. Three eggs incubate for 25 days. The babies are born mobile and stay on the nest platform for 30 days where they are fed mostly earthworms. YUM!

This gull often follows agricultural machinery to forage on flushed insects.

Can you believe they migrate 5000 miles to South America and Chile? The oldest recorded Franklin's Gull was 9 years and 5 months of age.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Ring-billed Gull

(*Larus delawarensis*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 17.5 in.
Wingspan: 48 in.
Weight: 1.1 lbs.

This is the smallest of the common white-headed gulls with a short bill and long slender wings. The adult gull does have a black ring on its bill. When this gull is in its first year, it has a dusky appearance. In its second year it is mottled and when it is an adult, it has a light gray back. That area is known as its mantle.



©Mary Williams Hyde



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Mary Williams Hyde

Ring-billed Gull

This gull is found on all bodies of water from small lakes and rivers to ocean. It often forages on agricultural lands. Also it can be found loitering around restaurants, parking lots, and city parks looking for handouts.

This gull is versatile. In a bird triathlon of swimming, running and flying, this gull would be favored to win. This ability to be a generalist makes it super good at surviving.

Even though this gull loves to eat junk food, it is careful about what it feeds its chicks. The baby gulls get nutritious fresh fish and crab and the parents get garbage dump food. Gotta take care of the kids!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



Ring-billed Gull and Caspian Tern have territorial dispute © Mary Williams Hyde



© Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Ring-billed Gulls have elaborate greeting rituals ©Mary Williams Hyde

Belted Kingfisher

(*Megaceryle alcyon*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 13 in.
Wingspan: 20 in.
Weight: 1.3 oz.

Sporting a disproportionately large head with a flamboyant crest, the belted kingfisher looks like it belongs in a punk-rock band. Both sexes have slate blue feathers with a pretty white neck and belly, but females also wear a rusty colored belt around their midsection.



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde

Belted Kingfisher

Usually perching above water to hunt, they will sometimes hover over the water in search of prey. Once a tasty morsel is spotted, they dive lightning-fast and head first to snatch it up in their long, pointy bill.

These birds nest in chambers at the end of tunnels dug out of steep banks, usually on the edge of water. The pair work together to excavate the nest and also take turns incubating the eggs. Kingfisher hatchlings cannot feed themselves, thus the parents must bring an average of 8 fish per day, per chick, for 27-29 days until the youngsters are ready to leave the burrow. Considering a clutch of 5-8 eggs, that's a lot of fishing!



©Mary Williams Hyde

You will find these birds almost exclusively near water sources that contain fish, although they will sometimes eat amphibians, mollusks, reptiles, and even berries. If you are near the water and hear a loud, insistent chattering call, look around and you will probably spot a belted kingfisher.

— Loree Johnson





*"Nature is to be studied with the eyes
of the heart."* ~ Mabel Osgood Wright

American Coot

(*Fulica americana*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 15.5 in.
Wingspan: 24 in.
Weight: 1.4 lbs.

The coot is not in the duck family as it has lobed toes rather than the webbed toes of ducks and has a stubby white bill. It is a marsh bird that forms large compact flocks. Coots have a white shield that extends from the bill up onto the forehead and thus have nicknames like splatterer, mudhen and more elegantly ivory billed moorhen.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Loree Johnson

American Coot

Many coots are territorial and will fight over territories. This aggressive behavior is to indicate this place in the marsh is mine!

Their nest is a floating platform with 8-12 eggs. Young coots hatch fully covered with downy feathers, their eyes open, and able to swim and follow their protective parents around. The babies are striped and very adorable.



©Mary Williams Hyde

Coots are not particularly graceful marsh birds and are named aquatic pigeons for the way their heads bob. When they don't feel like foraging for aquatic insects or hunting for snails and worms, they just steal from other birds!

Coots are adaptable waterfowl. They graze on dry land, tip with head underwater to snack on vegetation and dive to depths up to 25 feet. When alarmed, they often pitter-patter across the top of the water. However, once in flight, they are strong fliers. Some migrate and some do not migrate. Migration takes place during the night and is seldom if ever seen.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Sandhill Crane

(*Antigone canadensis*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 46 in.
Wingspan: 77 in.
Weight: 10.6 lbs.

Known for their unique dancing displays, these elegant, gray birds sport a distinctive scarlet cap and a specialized windpipe. Their deep, rolling calls are instantly recognizable, often heard from miles away. Among the oldest living creatures on earth, fossil records of them are more than two million years old.



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© Loree Johnson



© Loree Johnson

Sandhill Crane

Sandhill cranes migrate in huge flocks, resting in favored feeding spots along the way. Because they eat mostly plant shoots and insects, moist soils of farms, ranches and natural marshes attract them in large numbers.

They nest in wetlands with tall vegetation for cover. The pair, which mates for life, will share incubation duties of 1-3 eggs until the downy, yellow colts hatch. Colts weigh only about four ounces, but grow very quickly and are able to fly within two to three months. Colts stay with their parents for eight to ten months, from the nest to wintering grounds and often also on the northward spring migration.

— Loree Johnson



© Mary Williams Hyde

Sora

(*Porzana carolina*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 9 in.
Wingspan: 14 in.
Weight: 2.6 oz .

This chunky, charming little bird has the right feet for walking through marsh vegetation. Listen for its descending whinnying-call then perhaps you will see the gray and brown body, green legs, black face and yellow bill of this secretive marsh bird.



©Loree Johnson



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde

Sora

The nest is basket-shaped built of cattails and bulrushes 6 inches above water with 10-12 eggs incubating for 18 days or so. Because the Sora is a kind of rail and thus “as thin as a rail” they cannot properly cover all the eggs so the eggs are arranged in two layers! Once out of the egg, young drop into water and dive fed by adults for up to 3 weeks.

Small but mighty, Soras fly hundreds of miles each fall to spend winter in Central and South America. They migrate each spring to breed in North America and Canada.

Favorite food is seeds and snails and aquatic insects and wild rice. This diet makes them tasty so sadly they used to be shot and eaten. Now protective laws keep these special birds from being hunted. Currently their greatest threat is the destruction of freshwater marshes where they breed. Let’s all do our part to support wildlife refuges and all the creatures that need this unique environment to survive.

–Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Virginia Rail

(*Rallus limicola*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 9.5 in.
Wingspan: 13 in.
Weight: 3 oz.

Distinguished by its gray face and reddish breast, the Virginia Rail is a secretive bird, often heard but seldom seen. If you hear a high-pitched squeak near the marsh, you probably just heard a Virginia Rail. Except for breeding season, it prefers to spend time alone, walking through thick vegetation in marshes and wetlands.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Virginia Rail

Because it prefers walking over flying, the Virginia Rail has very muscular legs, at least for a bird.

Virginia Rails are mostly carnivores, eating insects and aquatic creatures. In winter, when prey is scarce, they supplement their diet with seeds and plants.

To win over his preferred mate, the male will raise his wings and run back and forth in front of her. They bow to each other as part of the ritual. Both parents share the incubation and feeding of their chicks, but it is the male's job to defend their territory. The female's job is to build several “dummy” nests to fake out predators and distract them from the actual nest. Perhaps it is this cleverness that helps them survive even while their habitat is quickly disappearing.

– Loree Johnson



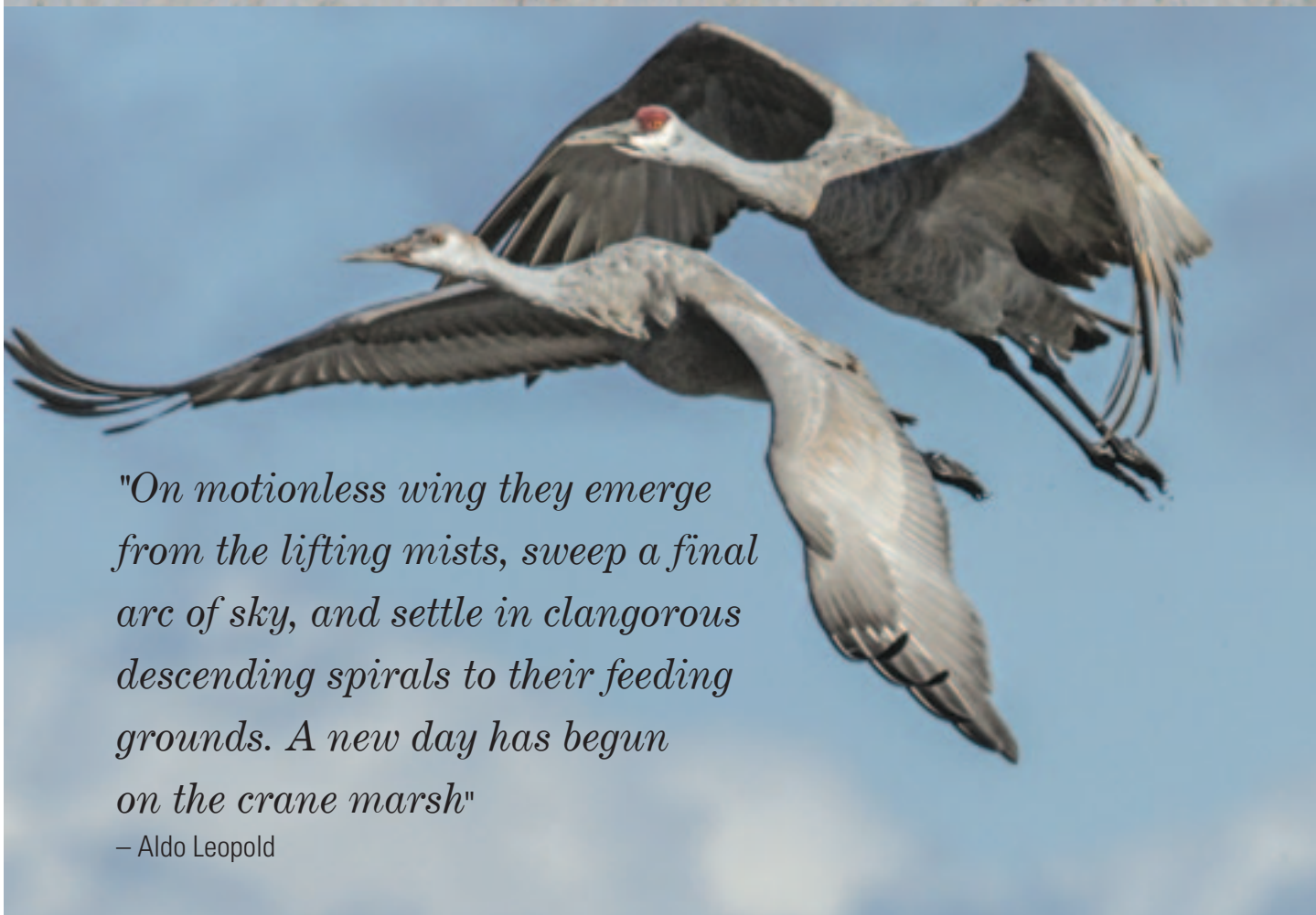
©Mary Williams Hyde



Sandhill Cranes are often seen moving thru tall grass ©Loree Johnson



Rare white Sandhill Crane ©Mary Williams Hyde



*"On motionless wing they emerge
from the lifting mists, sweep a final
arc of sky, and settle in clangorous
descending spirals to their feeding
grounds. A new day has begun
on the crane marsh"*

– Aldo Leopold

©Mary Williams Hyde

American White Pelican

(*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 62 in.
Wingspan: 108 in.
Weight: 17 lbs.

This huge white waterbird has a massive bright orange bill, making it impossible to mistake it for anything other than a pelican! During breeding season both the male and female pelican have a growth on its upper bill called a “horn.” Is it to attract a mate, is it used for protection? As humans, we can only wonder . . .



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Jack Noller



©Loree Johnson

American White Pelican

Pelicans often catch fish to eat by swimming in small groups and herding the fish together. The long bill scoops up the tasty fish. The lower bill has an expandable pouch that allows water to drain as it tilts back its head and gulp! It swallows up to 3 pounds of fish each day!

Young pelicans are a dusky-white color and it takes 3-4 years before they become breeding snow-white adults.

Pelicans can fly up to 200 miles in one day. White with black wing tips, they shimmer as the sun hits them. It is a thrilling sight to watch flocks of pelicans circling high in the sky. With their nine foot wingspan, they are a glorious sight!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

American Avocet

(*Recurvirostra americana*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 18 in.
Wingspan: 31 in.
Weight: 13 oz.

The Avocet has such beauty that it takes your breath away. They have stilt-like blue legs and an elegant slender bill that curves upwards. Their winter plumage is black and white, then spring comes, and both males and females grow feathers on their head and neck that are a beautiful cinnamon color.



©Mary Williams Hyde



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©Loree Johnson

American Avocet

Once mated, a nest is made on the ground called a scrape. Four eggs are laid and in 25 days the babies emerge mobile and downy and able to find their own food: independent, but with parents nearby protecting them.

Avocets can be dramatic actors. They pretend to have a broken wing to distract ravens or harriers or any other nearby critter. This leads the predator away from the nests and babies. Parents always protect their kids. Every species wants their babies to survive. —Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Loree Johnson

Black-Necked Stilt

(*Himantopus mexicanus*)



Length: 14 in.
Wingspan: 29 in.
Weight: 6 oz.

Elegant describes this waterbird. Delicate in black and white plumage, it has a thin fine bill, long neck, slender body all set on long coral colored red legs.

Stilts have the longest legs relative to body size of any bird. They were named correctly: stilts!



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Loree Johnson

Black-necked Stilt

These shorebirds lay 4 eggs that incubate in 25 days. The nests are called “scrapes” and are on flooded fields or on open ground. The parents distract predators by pretending to be injured and this takes attention away from the nest and eggs. There is dramatic crouching, screaming and quivering of wings. Heh, whatever the parent has to do to keep the kids safe!



©Mary Williams Hyde

The stilt's principal hunting technique is pecking, during which it seizes insects on or near the surface of the water. They eat both insects and plant seeds. Insects provide protein and plants provide carbohydrates. Makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Dunlin

(*Calidris alpina*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 8 in.
Wingspan: 17 in.
Weight: 2 oz.

In breeding plumage this medium-size sandpiper dazzles having a rusty-red back and black belly patch. However, the rest of the year it has a dull brown or "dun" color. All the better to blend in!



©Mary Williams Hyde



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©Loree Johnson

Dunlin

Dunlins are in a category of birds called shorebirds. This means they are small to medium sized with thin bills and long legs. They like open habitats like mudflats and shorelines. They eat small aquatic insects and worms by picking and probing.

Many experienced birders enjoy the challenge of identifying shorebirds which look a lot alike. Listen for loud slightly buzzy “dreez!” calls as one way to ID this bird which migrates through our area in winter.

Dunlin flocks are often huge in winter and are most impressive when they display their coordinated aerial maneuvers trying to escape being chased down by a Peregrine Falcon or Merlin.



©Mary Williams Hyde

Do not expect to see nesting Dunlins as they like to make their nests and have babies way up north in the tundra of Alaska. Their 2-4 eggs hatch with babies born eyes open, downy and feeding themselves. When nests are on the ground, the babies need to be independent to keep from being eaten by predators. Survival! That is all that matters!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Greater Yellowlegs

(*Tringa melanoleuca*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 14 in.
Wingspan: 28 in.
Weight: 6 oz.

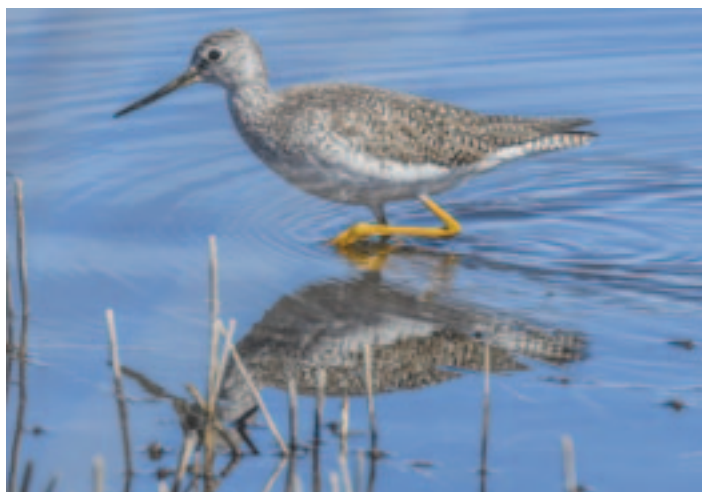
Often referred to as a “marsh piper” for its habit of wading in deeper water than other sandpipers, the Greater Yellowlegs is heftier and longer-billed than its lookalike, the Lesser Yellowlegs. With its flashy yellow legs, sturdy bill, and deliberate gait, it cuts a dashing, often solitary, figure on mudflats from coast to coast.– allaboutbirds.org



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©Loree Johnson

Greater Yellowlegs

Don't bother looking for where this shorebird is nesting unless you like to visit mosquito-ridden swamps and forests of the far north. It would however be fun to see a just born Yellowlegs emerge from its egg, open its eyes, fluff up its fully feathered body and then go find its own food! Parents will stay nearby to protect them for the first month of life.

Yellowlegs can be seen in winter in shallow ponds inland and along the coast. Be alert for the three note call repeated over and over again. Shorebirds can be hard to identify by sight so learning their songs and calls is a great idea. More important than identifying a bird is quietly watching them and tuning into their behaviors. Being curious is what makes a person a really good birder.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Killdeer

(*Charadrius vociferus*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 10 in.
Wingspan: 24 in.
Weight: 3.3 oz.

Killdeer babies are born mobile and downy and following the parent yet still can find their own food! For protection and to stay warm, they like to hang out under the comfy body of the parent. Count the legs under the parent killdeer above to find out how many babies there are. Those baby killdeers are so cute!

The killdeer yells out a hardy two note sound: “KILL-DEER” and that is how it got its common name.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Loree Johnson



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©Loree Johnson

Killdeer

Killdeer lay their eggs on the ground in a nest that is called a scrape. This makes it vulnerable to cows and horses and people who are nearby. So for distraction the parent begins to yell and act like it has a broken wing. It flashes its red tail and moves away from the nest. This ploy really works to move a predator away from the vulnerable eggs.

The lovely horizontal bands on the chest of the killdeer help to make it blend into the landscape. It is a shorebird that is often NOT seen at a shore. Look for it on agricultural lands, golf courses, gravel parking lots and even on the flat rooftop of a house.



©Mary Williams Hyde

The killdeer feeds mostly on insects which makes it a beneficial part of the ecosystem. Every bird is precious and deserves our protection.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Long-billed Curlew

(*Numenius americanus*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 23 in.
Wingspan: 35 in.
Weight: 1.3 lbs.

This Curlew is an impressively large shorebird with an even more impressive bill. Like other shorebirds, it has long legs for wading. It has a football-shaped body that is buffy brown with mottling on the back. Shorebirds are not known for being colorful. They are known for their beaks which either pick food from the surface or probe.

Pictured bottom right: Male stroking a female. Now that is a good way to get a mate!



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Loree Johnson

Long-billed Curlew

The Long-billed Curlew gets the award for the longest probing bill more than 7 inches in length. This bill is a tool that can pick grasshoppers and beetles from prairie grasslands where they raise babies. In the winter, they seek out watery places and probe for aquatic insects.

Isn't it amazing that a bird known as a "shorebird" goes inland to dry grassy areas and sometimes wet meadows to nest on the ground. The nest is called a scrape and takes very little time to create. This nest is a hollow on the ground lined with grasses and then 4 eggs are laid. Babies are born eyes open, downy and within hours they are feeding themselves. The attending parents stay close by. Predators include hawks, ravens, badgers, coyotes, weasels and snakes. It is dangerous to be born on the ground!!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Mary Williams Hyde

Long-billed Dowitcher

(*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 11 in.
Wingspan: 19 in.
Weight: 4 oz.

You will not see the breeding colors of rufous and black and gold on this shorebird unless you happen to be visiting the Alaska tundra in summer. Wear mosquito repellent for that adventure! More likely you will see wintering flocks in their grayish coloration. It is the impressively long and thick bill that clues you in to this species. Notice the white upper rump when in flight.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Long-billed Dowitcher

The bill of the dowitcher is full of nerve endings, which is useful for sensing prey. They walk along slowly, lifting their heads up and down like a sewing machine.

Favorite foods are aquatic insects, marine worms, spiders, seeds of aquatic plants and mollusks. This is a typical shorebird diet.



©Mary Williams Hyde

It is a thrill to come across the migrating dowitchers usually in a freshwater shallow pond of water. Yes, all shorebirds are challenging to identify but it is the pleasure of watching wild birds that is a great reason to go outside.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Spotted Sandpiper

(*Actitis macularius*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 7.5 in.
Wingspan: 15 in.
Weight: 1.4 oz.

Shorebirds are in a category of birds that generally look a lot alike. So what makes a shorebird a shorebird: all have thin bills and long legs and forage on small aquatic insects and worms by picking or probing. The Spotted Sandpiper in breeding plumage is . . . spotted on its chest and belly.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Spotted Sandpiper

These sandpipers constantly teeter, raising and lowering their rear body. In breeding plumage, they will have a white eyebrow, orange bill with black tip and light orange legs. When not breeding, no spots!

This is the most widespread sandpiper in North America. And guess what? The female mates with more than one male. She lays 4 eggs with as many father sandpipers as she can find. Males incubate the eggs. The nests are on the ground often next to a stream. Baby sandpipers are independent at birth. Once out of the egg, off they go to find their own food. Parents stay nearby to help them out. Well, mostly the male parent does that.

The Spotted Sandpiper flies with shallow strokes, its wings stiff and bowed, flicking rapidly in contrast to the deeper wingbeats of other shorebirds. If you spend time near streams and lakes, you will see this bird. Keep your eyes open and ready!



©Mary Williams Hyde

My suggestion is get to know these birds by the songs and calls they make and also be utterly patient. You will be rewarded if you watch these birds and enjoy their behaviors. Heh, that makes you a birder!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Wilson's Phalarope

(*Phalaropus tricolor*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 9 in.
Wingspan: 17 in.
Weight: 2 oz.

Elegant and dainty describes this tiny sandpiper. In breeding plumage the female has a handsome black "racing stripe" through the eye and down the long, slender neck. Males have a quieter coloration and both sexes have a thin pointed bill. Non breeding plumage is gray and white.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Wilson's Phalarope

Phalaropes feed by picking small food items like insects and seeds from the surface of the water. Their movements are active as they dart and jab and spin in tight circles in order to stir up food to be eaten. It is this spinning motion that aids in identifying them.



©Mary Williams Hyde

Female phalaropes are more brightly colored and guess what? It is SHE, the female, who does extravagant aerial displays in order to attract a mate. If the male does not appear impressed, she chases him down and mating occurs. It is HE who makes a simple ground nest by scraping out a slight depression on the ground and lines it with grasses. She lays four eggs. He incubates them and raises the kids. She is free from all parenting duties and may even find another male to mate with. Or she may just hang out with the other females all relieved of family chores. Every species has their unique breeding style that results in making babies and keeping the species alive. This style is sure to bring a smile to the face of most women!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Wilson's Snipe

(*Gallinago delicata*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 10.5 in.
Wingspan: 18 in.
Weight: 3.7 oz.

Sometimes described as "stocky," the Wilson's Snipe is a medium-sized sandpiper with an extra large chest. Those pecs create strong wingbeats which help them to fly up to sixty miles an hour. Also characterized as secretive and elusive, the snipe is the star of a legendary childhood prank. A snipe hunt is supposedly a practical joke played on an unsuspecting kid, convinced to hunt a non-existent bird. But, snipes are very real, and very interesting.



©Mary Williams Hyde

Wilson's Snipe

Because of its alertness, camouflage and erratic flight, eighteenth century soldiers found hunting them extremely challenging. They referred to the sport as "sniping," which later became the word we know today as "sniper."

In order to woo a mate, the male performs courtship behavior known as "winnowing." With the female on the ground, he will fly in circles high above, making short, quick dives. These maneuvers cause his tail feathers to vibrate and make a hollow, ghostly sound. Wilson's Snipes nest on the ground in moist soil, but unlike most other shorebirds, the female takes great care in lining her scrape. She will often weave together grasses or sedges to line the nest, starting with coarse material and working up to finer material on the top where the eggs will be laid. If there is not enough cover above the nest, she will also weave together plant material to form a canopy. Two to four eggs are incubated by the female while the male provides food to sustain her.

Chicks leave the nest immediately upon hatching, and begin learning how to use the special sensory tip of their long bills to locate insect larvae and other food. Wilson's snipe eyes are set far back on their head, allowing them to see behind even when busy probing for food in the mud. — Loree Johnson



©Loree Johnson

“If we can teach people about wildlife, they will be touched. Share my wildlife with me. Because humans want to save things that they love.” –Steve Irwin





©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

American Bittern

(*Botaurus lentiginosus*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 28 in.
Wingspan 42 in.
Weight: 1.5 lbs.

This medium-sized marsh bird has a neck with vertical streaks that help to camouflage its presence in a reed-filled marsh. It has a vase-shaped brown body from which the long neck and head with pointed bill extend.



Jack Noller



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Loree Johnson

American Bittern

To actually SEE a bittern is a unique birding thrill because it blends into the marsh by standing perfectly still with outstretched neck and bill pointed upward. It will even sway with the breeze so as to simulate the surrounding grasses and reeds.

Bitterns do not have a song but rather a strange call that sounds like a loud pumping “oong-KA-chunk” which can be heard up to a half mile away.



©Mary Williams Hyde

A Bittern is classified as a wading bird because it lives with its feet in water. It forages by standing absolutely still then stabs its prey which can be insects, crayfish, small fish or mammals. Bitterns like to eat frogs. YUM!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Black-crowned Night-Heron

(*Nycticorax nycticorax*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 25 in.
Wingspan: 44 in.
Weight: 1.9 lbs.

While most herons are tall and rangy, the night-herons are bulky, heavy-bodied with short legs, stouter neck and beak. The male and female have 2-3 long white plumes on back of head but his are longer and sometimes he has even more: all to attract the female!



©Mary Williams Hyde



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©Loree Johnson

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Juvenile birds have streaks on their chest and spots on their wings and yellow-green legs. For many bird species, it takes a year or two to look like an adult!

They are patient hunters often standing still and waiting for a fish or frog or insect to pass by. Sometimes they vibrate their bill in the water to lure prey into investigating the disturbance. This heron will also eat eggs and young birds like terns and ibis, mammals and amphibians.



©Loree Johnson

The black-crowned night heron makes nests with other herons and this multiple nesting site is called a “rookery”. It is protective to have so many nests close together.

Except when feeding its young, this heron is a nocturnal forager thus the name night-heron. The shape it takes at dusk evokes the image of a caped minister. Gotta love the mystery of these grand birds.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory

Great Blue Heron

(*Ardea herodias*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 54 in.
Wingspan: 72 in.
Weight: 6.4 lb.

Statuesque describes this elegant long-legged blue-gray heron with its dagger-like beak. The head is white with a black cap and handsome black plume. During nest building, the male brings the female sticks. She bows and greets him with a croak before placing the stick. Then it is time to mate and make babies.



©Mary Williams Hyde



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©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde

Great Blue Heron

These herons stand motionless at the water edge. Their sharp beak spears a fish. It is tossed into the air and swallowed head first! Wow! They are also known to eat snakes, frogs, small birds and mammals and even insects.

Rookeries are the name given to groups of nests inhabited by herons and egrets. 3-5 eggs are laid and incubated for one month. When the baby herons emerge, they want to be fed continuously until they leave the nest 2 months later. Heron kids are a lot of work!!

The beautiful plumage of the herons resulted in mass slaughter as the feathers were used in women's hats. Because of protective legislation, herons and other birds were saved from extinction. We must protect birds!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Loree Johnson

Great Egret

(*Ardea alba*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 39 in.
Wingspan: 51 in.
Weight: 1.9 lbs.

Sometimes also called the white heron or white egret, the great egret is a sight to behold. Standing over three feet tall, with pure white feathers, these large, elegant birds certainly catch the eye.



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Jack Noller



©Jack Noller



©Jack Noller

Great Egret

During breeding season, they get even fancier with long, flowing plumes called "aigrettes," which were once prized for adorning ladies hats and nearly led to the demise of the species.

A member of the heron family, great egrets eat mostly fish. But, they are opportunistic and will also eat rodents and small mammals, as well as amphibians, crustaceans, reptiles, and even other birds. They hunt by slowly stalking prey, or standing completely still then using their long, sharp bill as a spear.



©Jack Noller

Great egrets live and nest in colonies, which makes them especially vulnerable to human disturbance. While hunting or killing them for their feathers was banned in the early 1900's, simply creating a disturbance near the rookery can cause parents to abandon their eggs or even their chicks. However, observing them quietly, from a respectful distance can be very rewarding. Especially during breeding season, when they put on elaborate courtship displays.

— Loree Johnson

Green Heron

(*Butorides virescens*)



©Jack Noller

Length: 18 in.
Wingspan: 26 in.
Weight: 7 oz.

Secretive and solitary, these small herons roost and nest in trees, preferably near streams, lakes, or wetlands. With a call that sounds somewhat like a loud “gulp,” they are often heard before they are seen.



©Loree Johnson



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

Green Heron

A pair will brood 3-5 chicks. The young fledglings have a streaky unkept look and will need food and protection from the parents for one month after leaving the nest. Both adults and young have the ability to raise a crest, giving the appearance of a "bad hair day."

One of the few birds known to use tools, green herons have been observed creating fishing lures from pieces of bread, insects, feathers and sticks. After sending the lure afloat in shallow water, the bird then waits for a fish to come close. When the fish is within striking distance, the heron spears it with its razor sharp bill.

— Loree Johnson



©Jack Noller

Snowy Egret

(*Egretta thula*)



©Loree Johnson

Length: 24 in.
Wingspan: 36 in.
Weight: 13 oz.

This medium-sized egret has brilliant white plumage and long black legs. The distinctive black bill helps you know this is a wading bird that stabs its prey. The bright yellow feet are called “golden slippers.” And as if that is not beautiful enough, add feathery plumes during breeding season to attract a mate.



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde

Snowy Egret

This egret has lots of ways to get its favorite food of fish and aquatic insects. It will stand still and stab prey. It might vibrate its bill in the water to attract prey or stir up mud with its golden feet to flush prey.

This species was almost hunted to extinction as it was killed for its plumes to place them in women's hats. The Migratory Bird Act provided the legal protection that was needed to help the egrets rebound.

During mating season the male and female fly high into the air and then drop earthward, tumbling over and over, only to right themselves before landing. Now that is an impressive way to get a mate! There is hardly a greater pleasure than watching this most delicate and delightful bird. Go outside and hunt one up!

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



©Loree Johnson

White-faced Ibis

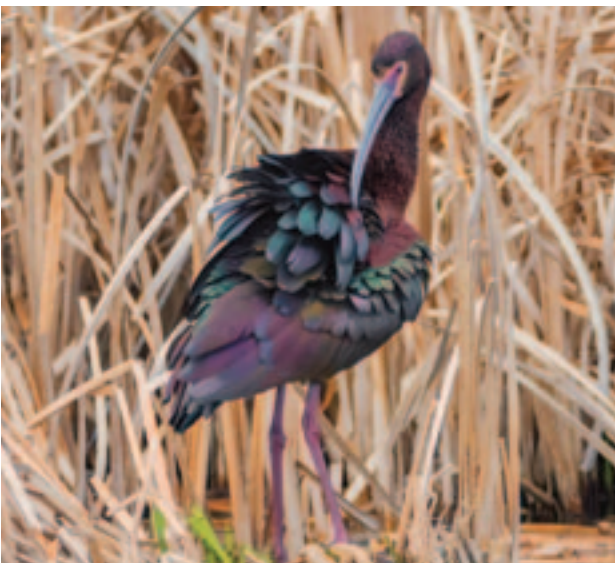
(*Plegadis chihi*)



©Mary Williams Hyde

Length: 23 in.
Wingspan: 36 in.
Weight: 1.3 lbs.

These long-legged birds striding through the marsh grass appear dingy until the sunlight turns their plumage a rich chestnut color with iridescent hues of bronze, green and violet.



©Loree Johnson



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde



©Mary Williams Hyde

White-faced Ibis

The white feathers around the beak provide the reason for their name. The distinctive beak probes into mud in shallow water to eat worms, crayfish, snails, leeches and other insects and their larvae. This gloriously shaped beak can find food by feeling it as well as seeing it.

Ibis are very social and nest in colonies along with herons and egrets. The nest is on or near the ground and usually 3-4 eggs are laid. They breed in the western US and sadly they are declining in numbers because of diminishing wetlands they require for survival and the use of pesticides.



©Mary Williams Hyde

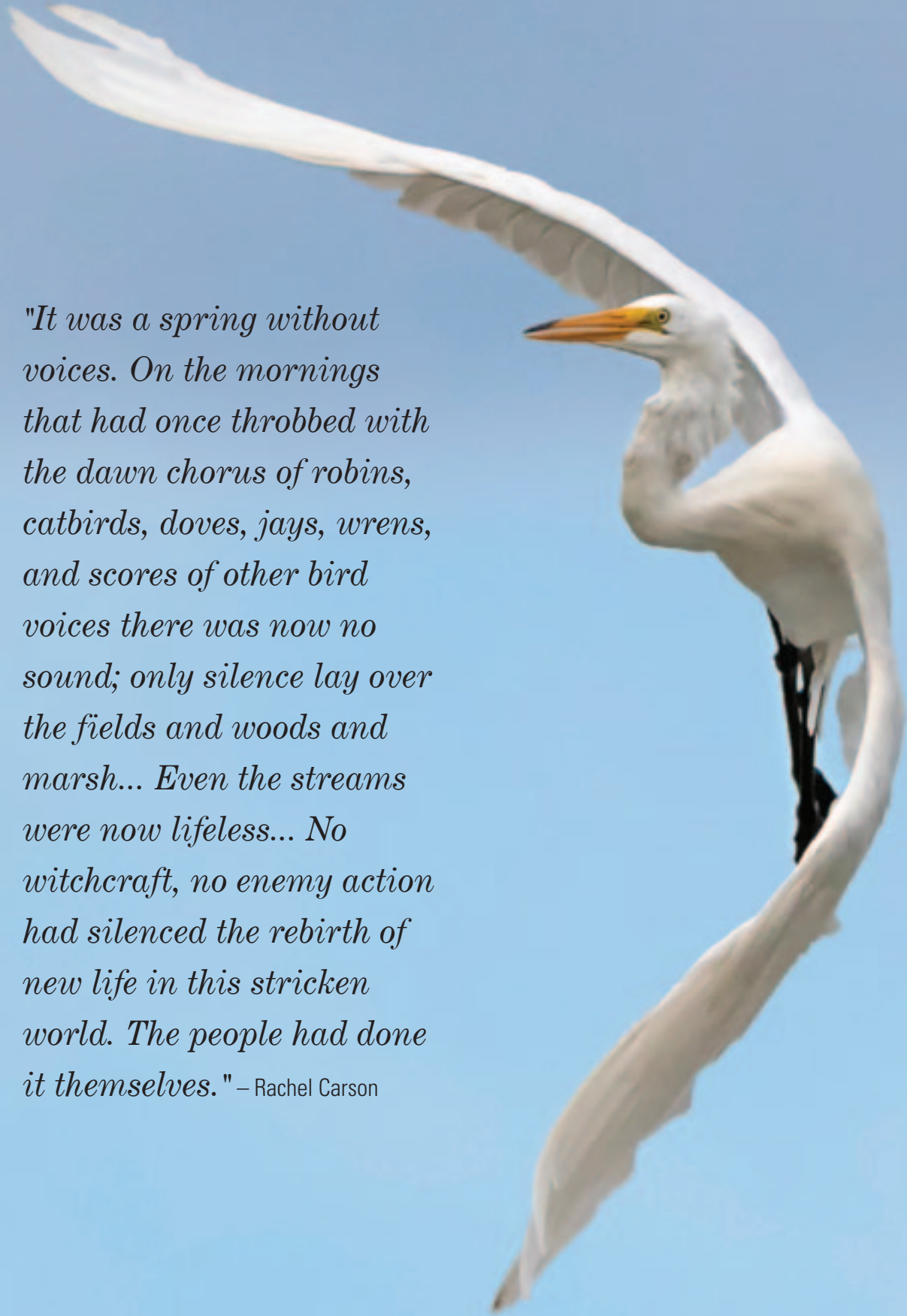
In ancient Egypt the ibis was revered. The sickle shape of the bill mimicked the curve of the new moon. Also it is likely they ate insects harmful to crops.

In flight, their magical shape reminds us that they are sacred and worthy of protection along with the wetlands they require for survival.

—Shannon Rio, Klamath Bird Observatory



"It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh... Even the streams were now lifeless... No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves." – Rachel Carson



This resource is the result of a creative collaboration of volunteers who donated many hours of time and effort so you can get to know these remarkable creatures. We hope this introduction to the water birds of the Klamath Basin will inspire you to get out there and personally observe the wild birds that live all around us. It has been a labor of love by those involved.

Loree Johnson, photographer, writer

"I experience profound joy in nature, and believe that all people should have the opportunity to experience it, too."

Loree Johnson is a nature photographer and passionate advocate for the preservation and restoration of ecosystems and wildlife habitat. She discovered a love for photography late in life at the age of 50 while living in Yreka, California. The desire to travel and document nature induced her to take an early retirement from a tedious desk job and go on the road. During her travels through the Western U.S. for six years (2014-2020) she collected a wealth of rewarding experiences and unique photographs. She volunteered for several National Wildlife Refuges along the way. During a stop in Tulelake, California en route to a volunteer position on the Oregon Coast, she was inspired to make the Klamath Basin her permanent home. After completing the volunteer assignment, she returned to the area and began searching for a place to live. It took nearly two years, but she finally settled in Dorris, California. Her goal is to further the cause of restoring the Klamath Basin ecosystem, including its wildlife refuges, to their former glory, in hopes that future photographers will have opportunities to experience the incredible and diverse wildlife and habitats of the region.

www.loreejohnson.com

Shannon Rio, writer, wildlife ambassador

Shannon Rio is board President of the Klamath Bird Observatory, a non-profit focused on advancing bird and habitat conservation through science, education, and partnerships. She is dedicated to this non-profit because of its work to preserve birds and wild places in nature. She is a wildlife educator with a goal to connect people (and herself) with nature so that they will want to protect what they love.

Mary Williams Hyde, photographer, graphic designer

"I am now into my seventh year of wildlife photography and I love every minute of documenting the wild and unpredictable action I see 'out there'."

Mary Williams Hyde, a graphic and web designer, who grew up on a large cattle ranch near Bly, Oregon, lives in Klamath Falls, Oregon. She has been a professional photographer since 1972, and uses Lightroom, Photoshop, and a wide variety of Photoshop plugins for post-processing, especially Topaz. She currently takes photographs with a Nikon Z9 and 2x teleconverter on a 100-400 Z lens. For 32 years, she traveled throughout the Great Basin desert country of eastern Oregon, northern Nevada, northeast California, and parts of Idaho, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado documenting the people who keep the old buckaroo/vaquero/Californios traditions of horsemanship and stockmanship.

<https://buckarocountry.smugmug.com/Birds-and-Wildlife>

Jack Noller, photographer

After retiring in 1974 from 20 years in the Air Force, and working for Overhead Door and Pacific Linen in 1985, it took ten years for Jack Noller to get serious about wildlife photography. His passion began when he attended his first Bald Eagle Conference and learned about the photo blinds at the nearby refuges. That was 1995. Jack has been photographing wildlife in the Klamath Basin since then. He used some of the blinds for two to three years until he realized he was driving his best blind.

So his journey began with an exploration of better and better photo gear and learning how to process color photos in his own darkroom which he did for about seven years. He had wanted to continue being a hard-nosed film guy, but the break down of key darkroom equipment "forced" him into the digital age, kicking and screaming, in 2003. Now he shoots with a top of the line mirrorless camera and loves how it performs.

He has been monitoring the Bald Eagles nest at LKNWR since 2013. In fact, for five years, he was the only person allowed to view the nest. That ended when the road was closed to everyone the year that the nesting island for gulls and terns was built. After that, a new regime at the refuge headquarters has kept the road open year around.

Jack has more Best of Show honors than he can count at county fairs, the Bald Eagle Conference and more. He has attended every Bald Eagle Conference, now the Winter Wings Festival, since 1995.

His heart is broken over the tragedy of the decline of the refuges.

We thank U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staffer, Steve Rooker, for inspiring us, then supporting us through the long process of getting the work done.



And then there are the occasional uncommonly seen waterbirds like this Brown Pelican. ©Mary Williams Hyde



Klamath Bird Observatory

WHO WE ARE

Advancing bird and habitat conservation through science, education, and partnerships Klamath Bird Observatory achieves bird conservation in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the ranges of our migratory birds. Emphasizing high-caliber science and the role of birds as indicators, we inform and improve natural resource management. Recognizing that conservation occurs across many fronts, we also nurture an environmental ethic through community outreach and education. We owe our

success to committed donors, volunteers, staff, and partners who demonstrate that each of us can contribute to a legacy of abundant bird populations and healthy land, air, and water.

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KBO urges everyone to help protect the wonder of wildness by buying Federal Duck Stamps, protecting our planet from plastic, keeping cats indoors, avoiding pesticides, hunting with copper not lead bullets, and taking yourself, your children and your friends outside. Teach yourself and others to take care of wild birds and the places they need to migrate and breed and live.

Learn more about Klamath Bird Observatory here:

klamathbird.org





Friends of Klamath Basin Birding

“We are here to support the hundreds of thousands of birds that migrate the Pacific Flyway through the vast Klamath Basin marsh, lake, and river wetlands every year and the countless more that live here year around.” – Loree Johnson

WHO WE ARE

Friends of Klamath Basin Birding is a group founded by Mary Williams Hyde and Loree Johnson in the spring of 2022. With a mission of awareness, advocacy, education, and restoration, the group has attracted a diverse membership of photographers, birdwatchers, conservationists and concerned citizens.

- Showcase photographers of Klamath Basin Birds
- Coordinate a calendar of birding specific activities
- Create educational projects and events
- Be a voice for the birds when advocacy is needed
- Create a birding community that supports each other
- Promote Birding Tourism
- Make sure visitors have the best experience possible

Subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

Get updates on bird sightings, the ongoing water crisis, the state of the refuges, upcoming events, and more.

klamathbasinbirding.com

**Join our Facebook page
Friends of Klamath Basin Birding**

Download PDFs of *Common Waterbirds of the Klamath Basin* from our websites FREE. If you would like printed copies for your classroom, birding event, or visitor center, contact us for help pursuing funding sources.



Black-crowned Night Heron ©Mary Williams Hyde

Here we were standing on the high head-land looking out over the land of our quest. Here spread at our feet was a domain for wild fowl unsurpassed in the United States. - William Finley, 1905

